

Lovett's Lights on HEBREWS



אברהם ויחזקיה
יזכור
ברוך
תקיעה שש: תדושישו
תקיעה שש: תדושישו

WITH REPHRASED TEXT

by C. S.
Lovett

WHY GOD IS THROUGH WITH JUDAISM—FOREVER!



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LIGHTS
on
HEBREWS**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. . .DR. C. S. LOVETT



Dr. Lovett is the president of **Personal Christianity**, a fundamental, evangelical interdenominational ministry. For the past 32 years he has had but one objective—**preparing Christians for the second coming of Christ!** This book is one of over 40 of his works designed to help believers **pre-
pare for His appearing.**

Dr. Lovett's decision to serve the Lord resulted in the loss of a sizable personal fortune. He is well equipped for the job the Lord has given him. A graduate of American Baptist Seminary of the West, He holds the M.A. and M. Div. degrees conferred *Magna Cum Laude*. He has also completed graduate work in psychology at Los Angeles State College and holds an honorary doctorate from the Protestant Episcopal University in London.

A retired Air Force Chaplain (Lt. Colonel), he has been married to Marjorie for over 41 years and has two grown daughters dedicated to the Lord.



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WITH REPHRASED TEXT BY

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Latest Word on the Last Days

Dealing With The Devil

Soul-Winning Made Easy

"Help Lord – The Devil Wants Me Fat!"

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PREFACE

pref

"Brother Lovett, we've got new translations coming out of our ears today. Do you honestly think we need another one?"

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That's the way a Christian brother responded when he first heard about **Lovett's Lights on the New Testament**. As yet he hadn't read any of them, he was simply reacting to the rash of new versions which have appeared in recent years. He thought we were simply coming out with another version. So I took a moment to explain just how **"Lovett's Lights"** bring out the treasures a person usually misses in his private Bible study.

1. Rephrased text. **"Lovett's Lights"** is NOT a translation. It is a paraphrase. Where two or three words are needed to bring forward the meaning from the original language, you are at liberty to insert them in a paraphrase. You cannot do this in a strict translation. When translators are limited to finding English equivalents for the Greek words, there is often NO WAY to set forth what the Holy Spirit is trying to say. But in a paraphrase there is no such limitation. You can use as many words as you need to make the meaning clear.

2. The Lights. After every few verses you will come upon a paragraph set in different type face and on a shorter line. You will see at once that it is different from the paraphrased text of the Scriptures. These are the **"Lovett's Lights."** Their purpose is to state in as few words as possible the hidden meanings and show how they relate to other great truths of the Bible. Background information such as customs of the times and the way certain words were used in Bible times, are included where they provide the key to interpretation.

3. The Questions. Each author in the New Testament has a definite burden which he tries to communicate in his book. Therefore you will find **key questions** scattered strategically throughout the text to help you keep the writer's burden in view. That way you can evaluate what you are reading in the light of what the author is trying to communicate.

When you put these three things together, you have to agree that **"Lovett's Lights"** does for the reader what no modern version can do. No matter how up-to-date a translation is, it says essentially the same thing as all the other versions. Inasmuch as they **DO NOT** offer any help with the passages, there is no way for them to expose the deeper meanings of the verses. For the person who does not have the time it takes to **DIG** into the Word, this is a fantastic blessing.

This is why **"Lovett's Lights on Hebrews"** is in your hands. These treasures must be made available to God's people. The average Christian doesn't have the time it takes for the kind of study needed to extract the hidden gems in these passages. Yet they are indispensable. Dear reader, God's Word has the power to change your life. But it can't be done with **SURFACE** truths. It takes the **DEEP** truths. And that's what this book gives you. It brings out the buried truths and puts them at your finger tips. When those truths grip you, watch your life change.

Shortly after you begin reading this book of **"Lovett's Lights,"** you will develop a "feel" for what God is saying. Before long you'll be sharing the burden of the apostle and the book will take on a new character. When you see the wealth of biblical understanding that has been opened to you, you won't be able to keep it to yourself.

If you are a Sunday school teacher, it will be natural for you to want to share all this with your students. If you're not a teacher, you may wish to open your home for a Bible study group. You don't have to be a trained teacher to do this. All you have to do is open the book and start using the **"LIGHTS"** as your teaching guide. It will be a lot of fun for you, and exciting for your students. Their eyes will be as wide as owl's as they hear one deep truth after another from your lips. Why some of those lights have enough in them to keep a discussion going for a whole evening.

So don't be afraid to start. The Holy Spirit will back you and make you an exciting teacher the moment you begin sharing these ideas from His Word.

C. S. L.

INTRODUCTION

intro

"MYSTERY BOOK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT"

4000 years ago a strange figure appeared out of nowhere. He halted the caravan of the patriarch Abraham, accepted tithes from him, and then blessed him. From what we know of the land of Canaan in those days, you'd never suspect there was a priest of God for hundreds of miles in any direction. Yet this man of God, whose name was Melchizedec, popped up in the path of Abraham. He disappeared just as quickly. All we know of him is contained in three verses of Genesis 14. We have no idea who he was, where he came from, or what happened to him. Yet, because he appeared on the stage of history for that brief moment, he was immortalized.

The book of Hebrews is like that. It is a mysterious work which appears in the New Testament under mysterious circumstances. You see we don't know where it came from or who wrote it. We don't know to whom it was written or when. Yet here it is, one of the most priceless books of the Bible. It would have been tragic had it not been included. Yet, it almost didn't make it. How it finally came to be recognized as part of the New Testament is truly mysterious.

DIDN'T PAUL WRITE HEBREWS?

Now if you were looking at the title page of the King James Version of Hebrews, my subheading would startle you. After all, across the top of the page it reads, "The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews." Well, those words don't belong there. The plain truth is, **we don't know who wrote it.** The book is completely anonymous. What's more, the name of Paul wasn't even associated with it until the end of the second century.

Despite this, Hebrews was well known and used by the early church. Yet, it was listed among the doubtful books. That is, it was questioned whether or not it was Scripture. Suppose you were a member of the early church councils trying to decide which books should make up the New Testament. Would you be in favor of admitting a book when you didn't know who wrote it, to whom or when? Hardly. That's why we don't find Hebrews mentioned in the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 190), the earliest listing of the books of the New Testament. It wasn't until 400 A.D. that Hebrews was finally included.

The work was so great, though, that in time the church leaders became convinced of its inspiration. It had to be Scripture. But how to get it into the Canon when they couldn't identify the author, presented a problem. According to standards already established, only the works of an apostle or someone in direct contact with an apostle could be admitted. So here's what they did. Satisfied that it was NOT the work of Paul on grounds of style, vocabulary and theology, they nonetheless agreed to accept it as Pauline. The ideas it contained were definitely those of someone who had been very close to the apostle.

Thus the church finally voted to call it Paul's work and admit it into the New Testament. That's how Paul's name came to be attached to it. You surely agree that is a strange way for any book to get into the Bible. But God works in strange ways. As for those who insist that Paul was the author, that is probably the safest guess—if one must guess. There is more evidence in favor of Paul than any other writer whose name has been suggested as the possible author. Scholars have given us more than 14 candidates, including such possibilities as Barnabas, Dr. Luke, Apollos, Silas and Philip. The thing to note is that when the church fathers were forced to select an

author, Paul is the one they picked. Here is the estimate of Origen, one of the church fathers of the third century:

“If I should state my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are the apostle’s, but the style and composition are the work of someone who called to mind the apostle’s teaching and worked from notes, as it were, on what his master said. Yet if any church regards this epistle as Paul’s, let it be commended on that score; for it was not for nothing that men of old handed it down to us as Paul’s. But as to who actually wrote the epistle, God alone knows the truth of the matter. . .”

CAN WE GUESS WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN?

We can come close. There are numerous references in Hebrews having to do with ritual details. These make it appear that the temple was still standing and going full blast. If this is the case, then it had to be written before A.D. 70, because the temple was destroyed by Titus that year. The thing that helps in setting the earliest date is the reference to persecution. It is clear that the original leaders had suffered for their faith (13:7). Now the first great persecution came during the time of Nero in A.D. 64. As a result, scholars generally agree Hebrews was written between A. D. 65 and A. D. 68.

CAN WE GUESS TO WHOM IT IS WRITTEN?

This is very hard. While the title says, “To the Hebrews,” it does **not mean** Jews all over the world. It is not speaking to Hebrews in general, but to a particular congregation of Jewish Christians. It was clearly an established church that had been in business long enough for its members to have their property

seized and be subjected to ridicule (10:32-34). Also, says the writer, enough time had passed for all of them to be teachers (5:12). Just where this congregation was located, we don't know. Some have suggested Alexandria in Egypt, others say Jerusalem. But the most scholarly guess appears to be the Jewish segment of the church at Rome.

For the purpose of this study, we're going to assume that the congregation was at Rome. If we're wrong, we're wrong. But since the apostle Paul has given us some insight as to the Jewish Christians at Rome, it will be easier for us to picture their reaction to the dynamic truths of his letter. See them, then, as the Greek speaking element of the great church at Rome. But here's something about which we are not left in doubt. . .

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Very clearly the book of Hebrews was written to warn Jewish Christians not to turn their backs on Christ and return to Judaism.

To understand why such a warning is needed, you'll have to picture yourself as a Jewish Christian of the first century and familiarize yourself with Jewish background. Hebrews, by the way, is one book that requires the reader to have a knowledge of historical background. This is not true of Romans or some of the other books of the New Testament, but it is certainly true of Hebrews. A person almost has to be a Jew to get the full impact of this book. Many things simply won't make sense unless understood from the point of view of someone steeped in Judaism.

So let's pretend you are a Jewish Christian. You are a member of the congregation receiving this letter. You have received Christ as your Savior. Even so, you

are loyal to your Jewish heritage. As a Jew, you were raised in the glorious traditions of Judaism and take great pride in your noble background. (Modern Jewish Christians similarly retain their Jewishness and like to refer to themselves as “completed Jews.”) After all, Judaism came as a revelation from God. The Lord Himself instituted the system of sacrifices and the priesthood. No other religion could make that claim. Here’s what’s so great about it:

(1) 2000 years before Christ, God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia and brought Him to the land of Canaan. There He promised the patriarch that He would build a great nation out of him and give to his heirs the land of Palestine as far as the Euphrates River. God reaffirmed that promise **in Person** to Isaac, Abraham’s son, and to Jacob, his grandson.

(2) Jacob had 12 sons who became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. The family went down into Egypt where it grew into a nation of more than 1½ million people. After delivering them out of Egypt, God brought them before Himself at Mt. Sinai. There, speaking through Moses their leader, He made a deal with them. If they would obey His voice and keep His commandments, they would be His personal nation on earth and He would dwell in their midst. He promised, not only to take care of them, but to exalt them above all other nations on earth, if they would keep their covenant with Him and remain true to Him.

(3) God provided a way for them to enjoy His presence in their midst. He permitted them to build a tabernacle for Him, a place on earth where His glory could rest. As soon as the tabernacle was built, God kept His promise and a visible manifestation of His presence (the she-

kinah cloud) took its place in the tent. In time the tabernacle became Solomon's temple, and finally Herod's temple at Jerusalem. To no other nation did God give a religion and a means for enjoying His presence in their midst.

(4) For 1400 years Judaism functioned as the only **divinely revealed religion** in the world. It was the only religion that had a system of sacrifice that God would accept for the sins of the people. If Gentiles wanted to approach God, they had to come to Israel and adopt the Jew's religion. The covenant with Israel was the only program in the world for getting right with God.

So here you are in Rome, a Jew who has accepted Christ as the Messiah. You have received the Spirit and are born-again. But things are getting rough. The Gentiles don't like you. There are signs of mounting persecution for all Christians. The Jews are beginning to persecute you too. Old friends turn against you. Even your means of livelihood is threatened. It's no longer fun to be identified with Christ. You stand to lose everything because of your commitment to Him as Messiah and Savior.

Satan has a field day with your mind. Your spirit is plagued with **doubts**. He whispers, "Did you do the right thing in embracing the crucified Carpenter? He claimed to be the Son of God. He said He would return, but He hasn't come back yet. Maybe you made a mistake in acknowledging Him. After all, His appearance in the world hasn't hurt Judaism. The temple is still doing business as usual. It might be safer to give up Christianity and go back to the 'good old religion' that you know was revealed by God. You would certainly be better off when it comes to surviving in this world. It's probably not too late. You could always say you made an honest mistake in assuming the Carpenter was the Christ."

THEN HERE COMES THIS LETTER

intro

It's a good thing, too. Those terrible doubts were beginning to take your mind. How wonderful to receive this letter from a friend, someone you greatly respect, someone who loves you and your congregation. Like you he's a Jew, one whose voice is heeded by Jewish Christians everywhere. As his letter is read to the congregation, his words touch your heart. The power of the Holy Spirit anoints his words. The truth of what he says stirs within you.

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Some of his words are frightening. It is down right terrifying when he speaks of the consequences of turning one's back on Jesus. It appears a man is better off never to have known the Lord, than to learn about Him and then reject His love. When you hear how far a person can progress in the things of the Lord and then fall away, your spirit is stunned (6:4-6). Beyond that, it is clear that God doesn't hesitate to deal harshly with His own people. Those who trifle with His Word, failing to act on His promises, pay an awful price for their indifference.

God can play rough. Simply because a man is in Christ does not exempt him from the "law of the harvest." Every believer must finally give an account of himself to God, and then he will find that he reaps exactly what he has sown in this life. All Christians will stand before God to receive from Him exactly what they have earned according to their investment in Christ. That is the most serious warning of Hebrews, which is a book of warnings.

But you need more than warnings. You need positive encouragement to cling to Jesus. You need to hear that you have not made a mistake in turning to the Lord, that investing your life in Him is the right thing after all.

Well, this letter does that. The writer knows exactly what to say and how to say it, so that a Jewish Christian will understand it—and feel it. After all, he’s a Jew himself. He knows how you feel about the great things of Judaism. He was raised to prize his Jewish heritage the same as you. But he apparently knows something you don’t know—Judaism has been superseded and replaced by Christianity. If he can convince you that Judaism is obsolete, then you will see for yourself how stupid it would be to forsake Christ and return to a program abandoned by God.

HEBREWS:

THE BOOK OF WARNING

ROMANS

HEBREWS

REVELATION



SALVATION

WARNING

JUDGMENT

Note the place Hebrews occupies in the New Testament. It stands between the salvation set forth in Romans and the severe judgment we find in the Revelation. The book is written to Christians, people who have already experienced the salvation of Romans. All people are going to be judged; Christians at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), and the unsaved at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:12). The writer to the Hebrews does his best to warn God’s people to press on in Christ, seeing they have but the one opportunity of this life to get ready to live with the eternal God. Those who ignore the warnings of this book will be sorry when they face the Lord at the judgment. The loss they suffer there will be eternal—and it will be because they have refused His invitation to get involved with Him and help Him build a family of believers for the future.

HOW THE WRITER CONVINCES YOU

intro

Knowing the glories of Judaism are precious to you, the author takes the sacred elements one by one and shows you how they are inferior to what you have in Christ. When you see that the BEST of Judaism can't possibly bring you what you already have in Christ, going backwards doesn't make sense. You've never made a step-by-step comparison of Christianity and Judaism before, so this letter really helps. In fact, it's just great!

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When the writer compares Jesus to the prophets, you are impressed to see how great Jesus is. When he compares the Lord with the angels (so highly revered by the Jews), you are overwhelmed to discover that Jesus is greater than any angel. But the comparison continues with the writer daring to compare the Lord with Moses. With that you're floored! Every Jew believes Moses is the greatest man who ever lived. But to learn that even he is inferior to Jesus is staggering. You feel your Jewish prejudices giving way.

When next you hear that God offers His people a better deal (covenant) through Christ than He offered Israel at Mt. Sinai, your heart begins to pound. Wow! This is getting exciting. Then—when he speaks of Jesus as your high priest, your heart almost leaps from your body! You always adored and revered the high priest of Israel. To you it was the high point of Judaism when he stepped behind the veil in the temple to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat. To consider that his action was nothing more than a symbol or picture of Jesus' sacrifice, it's almost more than you can stand!

It rocks you to think that Jesus' SINGLE SACRIFICE is good for eternity! As you recall the countless sacrifices made in Jerusalem over the past 15 cen-

turies, it floors you to realize that Jesus' one sacrifice is greater than all of them put together! As a Jew, your mind can barely fathom the truth. Why, think what that means: never again will ANY sacrifice ever have to be made for sin!

BUT IT DOESN'T STOP THERE!

You have probably visited the temple in Jerusalem. Most Jews do. Perhaps you were allowed to see the veil which screened off the most holy place. Of course no Jew is permitted to go near that hallowed spot. Even the high priest himself hurries in and out quickly when he makes the yearly offering. But now—wonder of wonders—you learn that the sacrifice Jesus made for you is so perfect that **YOU YOURSELF** can go directly into the presence of God. Yes, right into the Most Holy Place of heaven itself—and **feel at home!** (4:16).

How come this great privilege? The sacrifice of Christ was the real one. All those that were made before His, were merely symbols or shadows of the offering of Himself to God on behalf of sinful men. His once for all sacrifice really did put away your sins—past, present and future! And now, because His work was so perfect, you have “Become the righteousness of God in Him!” (2 Cor. 5:21). Just think, you can do what the high priest of Israel could never do, go into God's presence any time you wish and relax as His own son! All the rituals of Israel could never make a sinner a child of God, but Jesus can!

Who in his right mind would want to go back to the killing of animals and endless offerings for sin? Not you. It would be ridiculous to trade the real for the shadow. So right then and there you decide that Jesus is all you need.

OUR HIGH PRIEST

Now you can stop pretending you are a Jewish Christian. You are a Gentile of the 20th Century. If that's so, why should you be interested in the book of Hebrews? You're not tempted to turn to Judaism. What's the book of Hebrews got for you?

If you've been a believer any length of time, you have heard that the Lord Jesus is Prophet, Priest and King. He was indeed God's Prophet in the days of His flesh. And He is certainly coming back as the King of Kings. But what may not be familiar to you is that He is your high priest—**right now!** Since you do not have a Jewish background, the idea of a high priest is foreign to you. So what's a high priest to you? Well, that's the great surprise awaiting you in Hebrews. It is the only book in the New Testament that tells us about the Lord's priestly ministry. And it's going to be an education, believe me.

If you do not know about Jesus' priestly ministry, you're missing one third of what He has for you. You won't even know what He is doing for you this moment. Sure, you know your sins were washed away at Calvary. But do you really know why it is possible for you to feel comfortable in the presence of a HOLY God? There is something that Jesus does IN US that puts us entirely at ease in the throne room of God. Just what that is—is the grand treat awaiting you in this wonderful book. What a tragedy had it not been included in the New Testament. After you've finished studying this letter, your heart will burn within you whenever anyone speaks of Jesus as our. . .

HIGH PRIEST!

C. S. Lovett

HEBREWS

1 1. In the old days God spoke to our ancestors in different ways through the prophets. Their words and dramas provided glimpses of truth here and bits of insight there, but at no time was there any full disclosure of God's nature or His plans. 2. However, in these last days, He has spoken to us in a Son, by Whom He created everything that exists and Who is due to inherit the universe. 3. Now this Son, Who is the radiance of God's glory and the full and exact expression of His being, sustains the entire creation with His word of power. He is the One, Who after giving Himself to cleanse men of their sins, took His seat at the right hand of God's majesty, the place of supreme power.



GOD HAS SPOKEN. Any Jewish Christian reading these lines would thrill to the truth that God has spoken **ONLY** to the people of Israel. The nation began with God speaking to Abraham. From that time onward, He began to reveal Himself and His plans through the prophets. Of course we know today that God's revelation has come in two stages: the O.T. revelation and the N.T. revelation. In the first stage, from Abraham to Malachi, God spoke through the prophets of Israel. In the second stage (the gospel era), He spoke to the world through a Son. Yet it should be noted that the revelations are from the **SAME** God and form a **continuous process**, with the revelation through the Son as the culmination of all that went before. Jesus was a Prophet, the **LAST** of the prophets. No prophets came after Him, for He brought the final and complete revelation of God. It's true that the Lord revealed further details of the divine plan through His apostles, but the revelation of God Himself was complete in Christ. The book of Hebrews therefore begins with

the author comparing the MESSAGE of Christ with the other prophets and showing that Jesus is superior to them inasmuch as His revelation is superior to theirs. The messages of the prophets came in bits and pieces: sometimes in dreams, visions, dramas, rituals, a song, a bit of wisdom, or face to face communication with an angel. Usually it was limited to some particular problem in Israel. Their pronouncements were like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. At no time did any of the O.T. prophets see the whole picture or know what God was really like. Not one had the full revelation of God or knew of His plans for man. It wasn't until Jesus came that the world received a full and complete revelation of God. Thus, Jesus is superior to the prophets who came before Him. He brought a superior revelation.



IN A SON. The verse would indeed sound better if it said that God had spoken to us through **His Son**. But the Greek text is making a point when it says the final revelation came in "A" Son. The revelation came wrapped up in a Person, Who is God's Son. You see the full revelation of God cannot be **discovered** by man. Not only that, even if it could be discovered, there is no way for man to reveal God. For that matter, no man can precisely reveal another man. Therefore, the only Person Who can reveal God, is **God Himself**. The author of Hebrews means to show that Jesus is superior to the prophets in that He is **DIVINE** and they were only human. He was not merely an instrument of God to speak for Him, as were the prophets, He was **GOD HIMSELF**. The O.T. prophets used speeches and dramas to get their message across. All Jesus had to do was **BE HIMSELF**! This is clearly why His revelation supersedes all others. At no time did any O.T. prophet bring the whole truth of God. Each could only bring a part of the truth. Jesus **WAS** the truth. The O.T. prophets might grasp something from the mind of God, but Jesus **WAS** the mind of God. He is the sum total of all that can be known about God. This is why no other revelation can

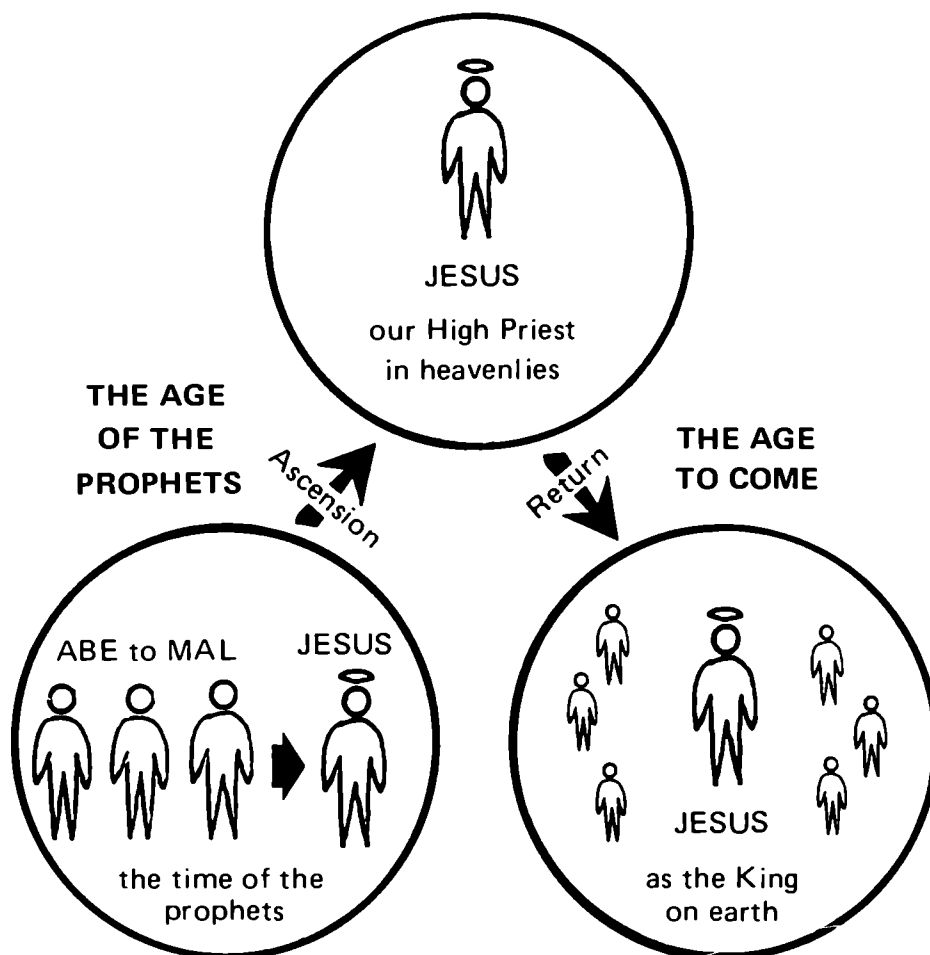
follow. And also why any religion that does not acknowledge Him as God in the flesh, has to be false.



THIS SON. In verse three the author presents the greatness of Jesus as God's Son in two wonderful pictures. First He is declared to be the radiance of God's glory. In order for Him to be that radiance, He would have to be related to the Father in the same way that sunbeams are related to the sun. Obviously, sunbeams must issue from the source itself. Therefore, Jesus is the **SHINING** of God among men. **Secondly** the author declares Jesus to be the exact expression of God's being. That is, His character and nature are so precisely that of the Father, that to look at Jesus is to see exactly what the Father is like. This is why Jesus said, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The only God we know, and the only God we'll see in heaven is exactly like Christ. Because the Son **IS** Who He is, He has functions which are far above all other beings. (1) He is the Creator of all things. Therefore, He was in on earth's history from the beginning. (2) But He is also in on the close of earth's history, for He is the "Heir" of all things. (3) Yet, He is also active between the beginning and close of earth's history, for He sustains and directs the entire activity of the universe with the word (command) of His power. (4) The Lord not only sustains the physical world, He also redeems men. He is different from the O.T. prophets in that He didn't **promise** forgiveness as they did, He **secured** it Himself. With His own blood He purged us from our sins. His purging not only takes away our **guilt** for sin, but also removes the **consciousness** of it, so that we can enjoy fellowship with God. (5) Beyond that, Jesus is at this moment seated **IN** the place of supreme power. He is therefore the most powerful person in all of God's kingdom. This means there is no problem He can't handle, when we come to Him for help. In Greek the idea of majesty means there is no other greatness. Thus, there is none greater than Christ!

JESUS—PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

THE PRESENT AGE



The story of the revelation of God in this world has been a progressive story—**up to Christ**. There it stops. No more revelation can come after Him, for He brought the full and final revelation of God. His coming marked the "last days" of the prophetic era, for He was the last of the prophets. Having completed His earthly ministry (revealing God and redeeming man), He was exalted as the KING of glory where He is the most powerful person in God's kingdom. "Seated at the right hand of God's majesty" is not to be thought of as a locality, but the place of supreme power in the spirit world. At the same time, His presence in the heavenlies (spirit world) provides us with access to the "throne of grace" (4:16). As long as Christ lives (and who could kill Him?) we remain the "Righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). This is why we feel at home in God's presence and why our future is settled. A new era will begin when He returns to earth to sit on the "throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32; Isa. 9:7). His kingship will be extended to earth as His millennial reign begins.

"Will the writer go on to make other comparisons?"

4. That He is superior to the angels is proved by the fact that He has inherited a higher rank than they. Clearly the name "Son of God" outranks the title of any angel. 5. At no time has God ever said to an angel:

"You are my Son, today I have become Your Father!"

Or again:

"I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to me!"

6. And when He brings His first born into the world a second time, He says,

"Let all the angels of God worship Him!"



ANGELS. The writer has finished comparing Christ with the prophets. He now means to show His superiority over the angels and will spend the rest of this chapter and the next doing it. There is no doubt in our minds as to His superiority, we're inclined to wonder why he bothers with such a comparison. But this wasn't true of those early Jewish Christians. They believed God was too holy to make direct contact with man; therefore, everything He did, He did through angels. They also believed that God did not give the Law directly to Moses, as we read in Exodus, but gave it to angels, who in turn gave it to Moses. We even find Paul consenting to this idea in his letter to the Galatians, "the Law was ordained through angels" (Gal. 3:19). Therefore, if they believed that angels gave the Law to Moses, then the angels were of a higher order than the prophets. Thus it would be necessary to show Christ's superiority over them. While you and I don't need to see Jesus compared with the angels, the Jewish Christians of that day did. The writer will turn to the O.T. Scriptures to

prove Jesus' superiority. He will quote 7 passages in this first chapter, each highly revered by Jews.



SON. In selecting O.T. passages to prove Christ's superiority over the angels, the writer wants, first of all, to establish that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. Once he does that, then he can show that being God's Son, places Him above every angel. For his first proof text he quotes from Psa. 2:7, where it says, "You are My Son, today I became Your Father!" It's true that angels have been referred to as "sons of God," but always as a group. Never at any time, in the long line of revelation, has any individual other than Jesus been called "The Son of God." Further evidence of Jesus' sonship appears in 2 Sam. 7:14 where it says, "I will be to Him a Father, etc." If the O.T. revealed Messiah to be God's Son, then that title obviously belongs to Jesus. When the text says, "I have BECOME Your Father, it is referring to the time Jesus became a man (His incarnation). Jesus always was God, so He couldn't become God. But as God, He could become a man. On the day He did that, God BECAME His Father. So now we have two O.T. passages definitely establishing Messiah as God's Son. Since Jesus is the Messiah, He is therefore higher than the angels, for no angel was ever said to be a son of God.



WORSHIP. For his third proof of Jesus' superior rank, the author turns to the 97th Psalm. The last part of vs. 7 says, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Obviously the lesser worships the greater. But should you turn back to that Psalm in your Bible, it won't read that way. It'll say, "Worship Him all ye gods." Why the difference? The writer is quoting from the Greek Version of the O.T. It was known as the Septuagint Version and abbreviated as LXX. Our author pays little attention to the Hebrew text (from which our Bibles are translated) and quotes the LXX all through His letter. So here and there you will find variations between the quotes in Hebrews and what you find in your O.T. It didn't

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bother the writer or his readers, so don't let it bother you. The believers of those early days were satisfied that these passages all referred to the Messiah—and the “gods” mentioned were actually angels. Now when Jesus appeared the first time, He was NOT worshipped by angels. He was a man subject to temptation and therefore LOWER in rank than they. However, when He appears the second time, He will be HIGHER in rank than they, for he will return as the EXALTED Son of God. When He takes over the rule of the kingdoms of this world He will be worshipped by men and angels alike. It's true, of course, that He is even now worshipped by angels as He reigns over the spirit-world at God's right hand. But in this passage the author is NOT thinking of heavenly worship. He sees that day when Jesus will be worshipped ON EARTH by the angels of God. This will add to the glory of His earthly kingdom.

“What does God say about the angels?”

7. As for the angels, He says:

“He makes His angels to be like winds, and His servants like a flame of fire.”

“What does God say about His Son?”

8. But when He speaks of the Son, He says:

“Your throne, O God, will stand for ever and ever! You rule your kingdom with perfect justice. 9. You have loved righteousness and hated evil; therefore God, Your God, has filled you with more joy than any of your fellows.”



MAKES. The writer was aware that his readers considered angels to be the greatest of all mediators between God and man. But if a mediator is merely a creature of heaven, he can **only represent God.**

On the other hand, if a mediator is only a man, he can **only represent man**. To be a perfect mediator requires that he be BOTH God and man. To prove that Jesus is the superior mediator, the writer means to show that He is **both** God and man. As we come to vs. 7, we learn that angels, far from being sons of God, are actually **created** servants. To establish this, the writer quotes Psalm 104:4. The Greek word for “makes” in this passage indicates that they are merely creatures, and like the forces of nature are wholly at God’s disposal. It suits the author’s purpose to quote a verse which puts angels in the same category as material things, such as wind and fire. This shows clearly that they are in a class far below the Son of God. Even though He entered the human stream via a physical birth, He was NOT created at that time. He existed eternally. He simply made a change of status when He appeared as a man. As we come to vs. 8, God is again speaking and He addresses the Son AS GOD. This quote from Psalm 45:6 places Jesus in direct contrast with the angels who are but servants. These words from the O.T. were addressed to a king of Israel at his enthronement, but as you can tell from the context of the Psalm, the language is such that the prophets and scholars have ever since been convinced that it was referring to the Messiah. The king who was being enthroned was probably of the line of David and therefore the words went beyond him to the promised “Son of David,” the Messiah.



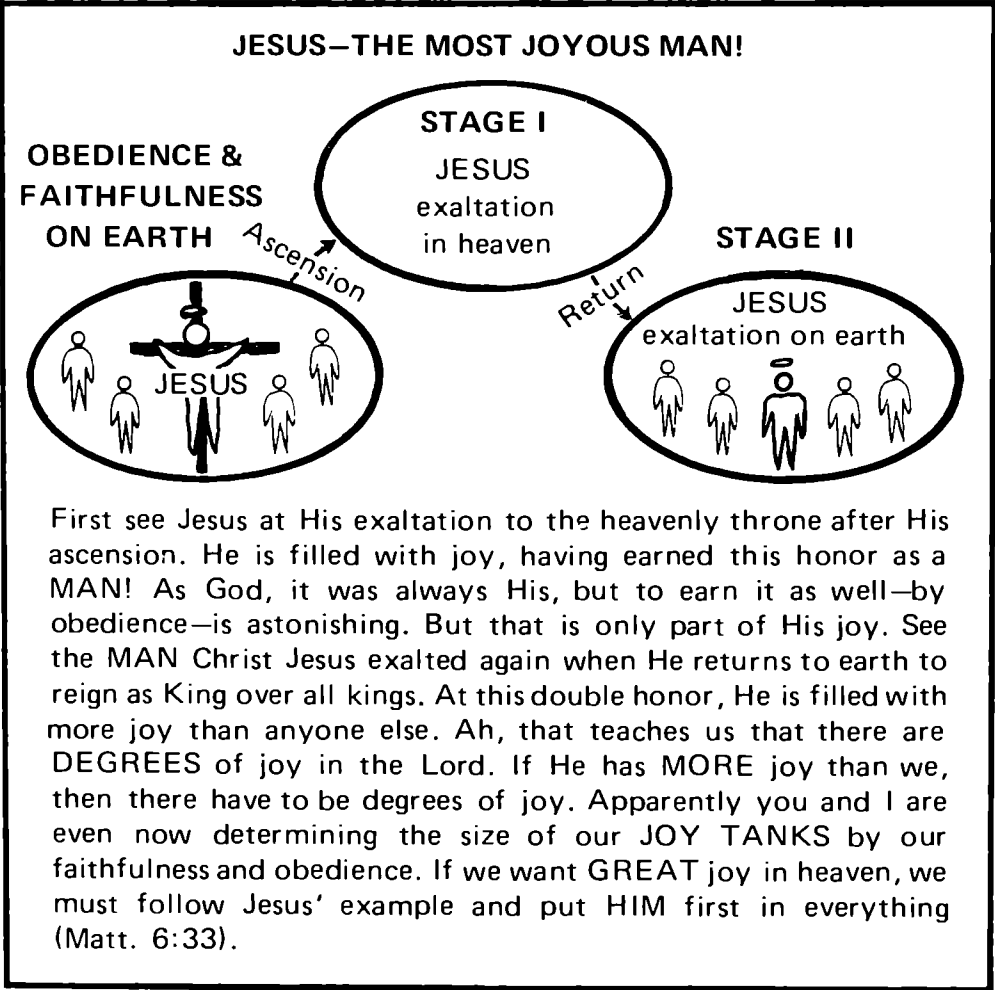
O GOD. Here in vs. 8, we find something rare in the N.T.—a statement to the effect that Jesus is God. Most N.T. writers prefer not to state the deity of Christ. Instead, they imply it. This could be due to the fact that Jesus Himself didn’t claim to be the Deity in precise words. Yet there was no doubt in His mind that He was equal with The Father (Phil. 2:6). The Jews understood Him to be claiming this equality in the works that He did. That’s why they sought to stone Him (John 5:18). But here we have a N.T. writer claiming that Jesus IS GOD, using an O.T. quote to

prove it. Note, then, that while we have Jesus referred to in vs. 5 as the SON of God, here in vs. 8 He is actually addressed AS GOD. There are no degrees of Deity. One is not more or less God. Either He IS God or He ISN'T. Therefore, the SON IS GOD. He is the eternal God and His kingdom is therefore eternal. Even when Jesus lived on earth AS A MAN, He was God. There was no way for Him to divest Himself of His eternal character or nature. Righteousness is part of His being. Thus, when He lived on earth He hated evil and loved righteousness. His divine nature was showing. We therefore conclude that the quote which speaks of His loving righteousness and hating evil, refers to His sinless life as a man on the earth. And because He manifested the divine nature ONLY, while He lived as a man (He could have displayed the human nature, for He had that nature as well), He earned the baptism of JOY mentioned in vs. 9. With righteousness as His nature, He can only rule one way—with perfect justice. For that reason, righteousness is the scepter or basis of His kingdom.



YOUR GOD. As we come to vs. 9, a striking contrast appears. In vs. 8 it reads, "Your throne, O God. . . ," and He is pictured as the eternal God. But here in vs. 9 it reads, "Therefore God, YOUR GOD, has filled You. . . etc," and He is seen as **having a God**. Apparently we are to think of Him in BOTH roles; (1) as the eternal God, and (2) also as the Mediator between God and man, the God-Man. The emphasis now is on the fact that He is a MAN. The verse says He is going to be flooded with joy above all "Your fellows." But when and where does this filling with joy occur? Some commentators say it took place in heaven, others that it will take place on earth. They are probably both correct. Since He is BOTH God and Man, He is filled with joy in both places. See it is like this: (1) when He ascended to heaven after completing His work on earth, He was restored to the glory he had before the incarnation. Before all the angels He was invested with honor as the One True God and their Creator; (2) when He returns to earth as the

King of Kings He will be honored as a MAN! He will be entitled to rule over mankind because of His sinless life and sacrifice of Himself. He will be worthy to rule, because He is a **righteous MAN**. Thus He has a double portion of joy. But who are “Your fellows?” We are. All believers are due to share His honor and glory with Him as “joint heirs” and scheduled to reign with Him for the 1000 year period of earthly rule known as “the millennium” (Rev. 20:6). We are the Lord’s fellows, His brethren. The angels are NOT. They’re His servants. In that day they will not reign with Him. But it says His joy will exceed ours. Will we mind that? Never. He deserves it because of His greater obedience and faithfulness. Through His total sacrifice of Himself and complete dedication to the will of God, He developed a greater capacity for JOY than those whose dedication is less than His.



10. And He is again referring to the Son when He says:

"It was You, Lord, Who made the earth from nothing, and with Your own hands made the heavens. 11. They will perish and go back to nothing, but You will remain; they will wear out like old clothes. 12. Some day You will fold them up like a tattered cloak, and exchange them for something new. You, however, will remain the same and never grow old."



SAME. As we come to vss. 10-12, our writer goes back to the O.T. for more quotations. We come now to his 6th quote in 12 verses. This one is from Psalm 102:25-27. This is a powerful psalm, which the prophets and scholars all agree refers to Messiah. Since the Jewish Christians believed Jesus to be the Messiah, it provides a smashing argument. Before we consider these verses, though, we need to look at the two previous verses. In vss. 23 and 24 of this same psalm, the scene is that of the Son as a young man. He is but 33 years old. And as He thinks of the cross, He cries out to the Father that He is too young to die. Then God answers this very human and touching cry with the words of vss. 10-12 of this chapter. The Father says 3 remarkable things about His Son: (1) He is the One Who created the Universes; (2) He is going to change it (or exchange it) at the consummation; (3) He, however, is absolutely unchangeable, so that when the entire physical program is over, He Himself remains. In these verses the writer is seeking to show the **eternal nature** of the Son in contrast to the angels whom He brought into being. He is also contrasting the Son's eternal nature against the transient nature of the physical universe. Everything physical dies, even the sun. The world is wearing out like an old suit of clothes. As a man may wear out many suits in a lifetime, so God has seen and may yet see many universes come and go. Since the Son is the Creator of all things—the One Who exchanges the universes—He does not

change nor do His years come to an end. That's why He is the "same, yesterday, today and forever!" (13:8).



LORD. We have come to the place where we should comment on the writer's use of the O.T. in writing to the Hebrews. First, we see that no matter who is speaking in the passage, he takes the liberty of assuming the words are from God. Then, he also changes the persons addressed and sees the words as being addressed to Christ. To his mind, this is perfectly in accord with the idea that Judaism has been fulfilled by Christianity. He sees the gospel as fulfillment of the Jewish faith, therefore he regards it proper to take passages which originally applied to the king of Israel, the Psalmist himself (David), the Messiah or even to God, and make them all apply to Christ. That's because he believes Jesus is the fulfillment of all these. Later we'll find him taking passages that are written to Israel and applying them to Christians. Very clearly he used this technique on Psalm 102:25-27 which is quoted in vss. 10-12 above. Yet, if you turn back to that reference in your Bible, you won't find the word "Lord." Why? He is again quoting from the Greek text (LXX), and not the Hebrew. In calling Jesus "Lord," he is addressing Him by the highest name ascribed to Deity. The word "Lord" as used here, is the same as YHWH (Yahweh/Jehovah), granting to the eternal Son that name "which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). But the apostle Peter does the same thing when he says, "... sanctify the **Lord** in your hearts" (I Peter 3:15). Paul is equally definite in affirming that Jesus has been exalted "above every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the one to come" (Eph. 1:21).

13. But when did God ever say to an angel:

"Sit here at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet?"

14. What are the angels, really? They are but spirit-

messengers; servants actually, sent by God to minister to the heirs of salvation.



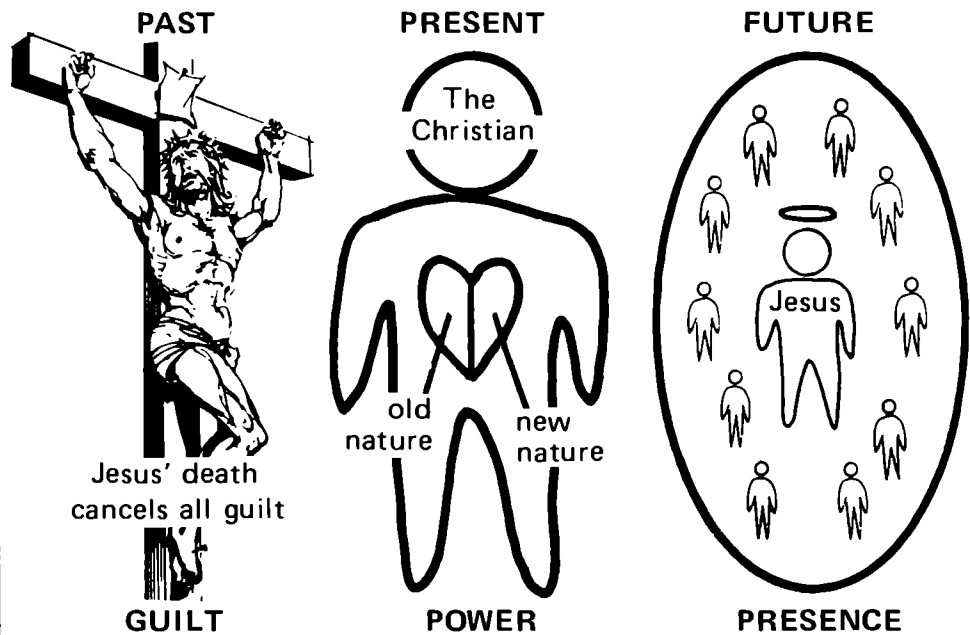
SIT. For his 7th quote from the O.T., the writer now brings forth the mighty 110th Psalm. Quoted more often in the N.T. than any other O.T. passage, this is the one used by Jesus to silence the Pharisees when they challenged Him (Matt. 22:41-45). Back in verse 3 we got a hint of this truth when the writer said Jesus was exalted to God's right hand. Now we meet the verse itself. It is cited as the crowning proof of Jesus' superiority over the angels. God is the speaker. He says to His Son, "Sit at My right hand" (a Hebrew expression for occupying the throne and ruling with supreme power). No angel was ever offered the privilege of sitting on God's throne, much less **RULE** with supreme power. The most exalted of them **stand** in God's presence, but none has ever been privileged to **reign**. It is the Son who is seated on God's throne ruling over heaven with total authority. Later, we'll be learning what He does with this power. Then—at an appointed time, using the power that is His, He will suddenly appear in the skies above the earth. Behind Him will be all His saints, looking much like an army. So numerous will they be, they will seem like clouds (the sign of the Son of man). Jesus will wage war against the anti-christ (the beast) and the host of unbelievers. Jesus will defeat every enemy and assume the earthly throne as the supreme monarch of the world. His rule will cover earth as well as heaven. The expression "make your enemies a footstool," is taken from an ancient custom. In the O.T. we see Joshua placing his foot on the necks of conquered kings as a token of their complete subjection. Here it pictures the Lord's total victory over the forces of Satan on the earth. No angel, of course, was ever promised such a thing.



HEIRS. Angels were never meant to rule—even the highest of them. They were designed to serve. As such they are not to be compared with the Son Who created them. Regardless of their rank, they

remain as “ministering spirits,” i.e., they serve in the spirit. But notice **who** they serve—“the heirs of salvation!” Who are they? All of us who are God’s sons through faith in the Lord Jesus (1 John 3:1, 2). They minister to us as they did to Jesus (Luke 22:43). Theirs is the task of watching over us and ministering to us as God directs. The Gk. word for them is not “servants,” but **ministers**. They minister for God. Thus they are HIS servants, not ours. They serve us on HIS orders.

THE THREE TENSES OF SALVATION



This truth is absolutely vital to understanding N.T. salvation. Without a grasp of these three tenses, a person can easily draw the wrong interpretation from some verses. When a man receives Christ, the **GUILT** of ALL his sins is removed. It is guilt that sends people to hell. With guilt removed, going to hell is impossible. Also, when a man receives Christ, he receives a righteous nature. But this is in addition to the **OLD** nature which he already had, a nature prone to do evil. Once he tries to live a godly life, he finds the war between his two natures almost forbids it. As a result he sins many times. It is then that he discovers the **POWER** of sin in his life (Gal. 5:17). At physical death (or the rapture) the old nature drops off with the body and he is finally free of every evil impulse. When that happens he will have been delivered (saved) from the **PRESENCE** of sin, and inherited (heir) the final form of his salvation.

Now how do you like being called an HEIR of salvation? You're probably ready to ask, "Hey! Don't I have my full salvation right now?" To answer that we observe the 3 tenses of salvation: past, present and future. As believers we have been saved from the GUILT of sin (past tense). We are presently being saved from the POWER of sin (the present tense) and one day we'll be delivered from the PRESENCE of sin (future tense). We are the sons of God NOW, because we have received the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9b). But the Spirit is said to be the "down payment" on our salvation (Eph. 1:14). Thus while we are God's sons now, we have not yet entered into ALL the privileges of our sonship. Why? Some of those privileges have to do with the resurrection body, reigning with Christ when He returns, and sharing in His glory. Obviously then, part of our salvation experience is future. However, we are as certain of entering into those privileges as Jesus is certain of inheriting His kingdom. We are "joint-heirs" with Christ, and our inheritance is as secure as His.

THE FIRST WARNING—vss. 1-4

"If Jesus is greater than the angels, shouldn't His Word to us carry more authority than theirs?"

2 1. You can see then why we must cling tenaciously to the truths we've heard. If we don't, we can easily drift from them and that is dangerous. Why? 2. If the Law, which was passed on by angels, had such force that every infraction and violation was met with specific retribution, 3. how can we hope to escape the consequences if we neglect the great salvation that was given to us? After all, the truth we received didn't come by way of angels. It came from the Lord Himself through unshakable conviction, 4. because God certified their message by adding His witness to theirs. God's testimony came in the form of signs and wonders and many works of

power. What's more, we ourselves have received gifts of the Holy Spirit as it has pleased God to distribute them to us.

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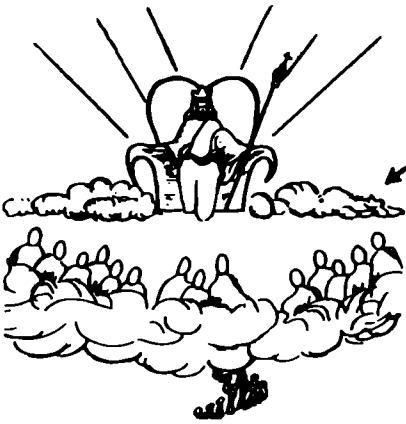
DRIFT. We come now to the first of 5 warnings our writer will sound in the book of Hebrews. His technique is clear. First of all he establishes the truth of Jesus' greatness from the Scriptures. Then he uses that truth as a basis to warn his readers. That this warning is connected with chapter one is clear from the connecting words. . . "You can see then. . ." His warning is this: If Jesus is greater than the angels (as he has just proved), then his readers should pay more attention to what He says than anything spoken by angels. Specifically he warns them to **CLING** to the truths of Christ, for if they don't, it is easy to drift from them. He means to show that drifting from Christ is dangerous. This is a serious warning. Since the greater revelation has come through Christ, a greater responsibility falls on those receiving it. This warning is to be taken in the sense of a boat drifting from its mooring because the owner has neglected to make it secure. It is pictured as getting caught in the currents and drifting out of the harbor to disaster. The Jewish Christian is thus warned to make sure he anchors his life securely to the truth of Christ. If he doesn't, and becomes careless with those truths, he'll drift from Christ and head toward danger. The simple neglect of the things Jesus taught and commanded can cause a person to lose the entire investment of his life on earth. This is why the writer to the Hebrews urgently warns his readers against drifting back to Judaism, and from there, into the ways of the world. The truth of Christ is the only safe harbor in this life.



ESCAPE. We next learn that there are definite consequences for neglecting or being careless with the truths of Christ. The writer's logic was bound to impress his Jewish readers. He says, "If the O. T. saints were punished for their failure to heed the word of angels (believing the Law came through angels) how


THE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECT

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

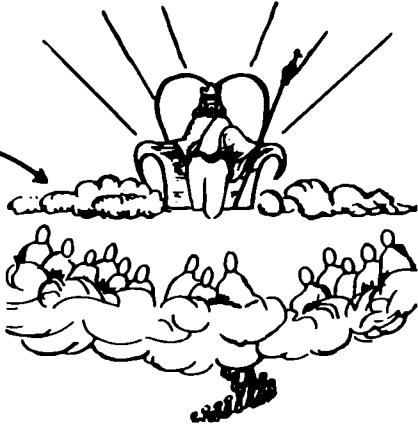


BELIEVERS

1,000
YEARS



GREAT WHITE THRONE



UNBELIEVERS

The consequences for neglecting the truths of Christ are meted out at two separate judgments. **Believers** are judged at the "judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). **Unbelievers** are judged at the "Great White Throne" (Rev. 20:11, 12). In both cases, people are judged for their **WORKS**. The Christian is immune from the **GUILT** of sin, because Christ died in his place. Therefore he cannot go to hell. That is why he is judged separately from the unbeliever. Yet he is judged for what he has **done** with his Christian life. His status in heaven is based on that judgment. Having refused Christ, the unbeliever is **GUILTY** of his sin and destined to spend eternity in hell. He too is judged for his works. There are degrees of hell even as there are degrees of heaven. The judgment rendered against him at the "Great White Throne" determines his status in hell. Thus we see that **BOTH** believers and unbelievers will be sorry for ignoring or disobeying the truths of Christ. Those who appear to be getting away with Christ's commands, really do not. They will be judged and the consequences of that judgment are eternal.

much more severe would be the punishment for neglecting the Word of Christ." The O. T. demanded reverence and obedience from the people and is full of examples of those who died without mercy because they were careless with God's Law. But the gospel is even more sacred and binding than the Law. Therefore those who neglect it or violate it can expect to be treated

even more severely. This warning appears to be addressed to BOTH the saved and the unsaved. Those ignoring the invitation to eternal life, naturally suffer eternal death. Those Christians who neglect Jesus' command, "follow Me," are also in for a surprise. There is no way for either Christians or non-Christians to ignore the truth of Christ and get away with it. The writer asks, "How can WE hope to escape?" The answer: "we can't." There is no escape. Being a Christian does not remove a person from the consequences of disobedience. God will forgive believers if they drift from the Word of Christ and go into sin, but He will NOT protect them against the consequences. If their lives become derelict and squandered in self-living, they will have to answer for that waste at the judgment seat of Christ. That judgment is going to demand a strict accounting from every Christian. Those who have been careless, refusing to live for Christ as He asks, will be sorry. Those who spend their time and talents in living for self and family, trying to get ahead in this world, will find that God will be severe. Those who have received the truths of Christ know better.



CERTIFIED. Now some of those Jewish Christians could reply, "Hey! How do we know those are the truths of Christ? We didn't hear Him ourselves! He didn't speak to us directly!" That's true, agrees the writer, "WE" didn't hear them directly from the lips of Jesus, but we have heard them from those who did. And they have transmitted them to us with great power and authority. It was not just a matter of the apostles using the powers of persuasion. God backed their words with supernatural signs. The fact is, the gospel came to those Jewish Christians (and to us) with more force than did the Law to the O. T. saints. The writer gives 4 reasons why the gospel is more valid and binding than the Law: (1) the truths came from the Lord Himself. His resurrection validated every claim He made; (2) His teachings were passed on by the apostles with such power that sinners turned to Christ and were

changed; (3) God backed the words of the apostles with miracles to attest to the truth they proclaimed; (4) beyond that, the gospel was confirmed in the lives of the believers by the various gifts of the Holy Spirit. The latter was perhaps the most conclusive evidence of all to those early Christians (Eph. 1:13). In the early church, there were manifestations of spiritual gifts on a wide scale. These included gifts of healing, prophecy and

THREE KINDS OF MIRACLES

SIGNS



Peter's raising of Dorcas from the dead

WONDERS



Jesus' walking on water

WORKS OF POWER



Paul's blinding of the magician on Cyprus

As the apostles relayed the truth of Christ, their preaching was confirmed by miracles. God added His witness to their testimony by working miracles through them. Wherever they went with the truth of Christ, these miracles were their credentials and proof that they spoke for God. The words "signs"—"miracles"—"works of power," are technical terms used in the N.T. to describe the various types of **miracles** experienced in the early church. They sort of overlap, but generally they can be regarded this way: "signs" are miracles which certify the speaker. Peter's raising of Dorcas from the dead was a sign of God's presence and power in him. "Wonders" are miracles intended to awaken amazement in the viewers such as when Jesus stilled the storm and came walking on the water. "Works of Power" are miracles meant to show God as the source of the power, as when Paul blinded the magician on the island of Cyprus. Note that these miracles are NOT done at the will of the preacher, but as the Holy Spirit elects to do them through His servants. They are not gifts which can be exercised at the option of the messenger.

tongues. The purpose of this supernatural activity was to authenticate the truth of Jesus. The Jewish Christians who received this letter, were well aware of the operation of the gifts, otherwise the writer wouldn't have mentioned them. Thus the truths of Christ were confirmed to them. So it is not the lack of evidence that causes people to be indifferent or neglectful of the gospel. They are that way because they prefer to do something else with their lives. The warning stands: if Christians don't want to drift from the truths of Christ, they'd better give them the priority in their lives. If they don't CLING to them, they will drift into disaster.

"Is the writer through comparing Christ with the angels?"

5. The future world then, which is always before us in this discussion, will not be run by angels. 6. We are assured of that in a passage where the writer says:

"What is man that You should pay any attention to him? Or the son of man that You should care what happens to him? 7. You made him for a little while lower than the angels, You crowned him with greatness and honor, and have put him in complete control of Your creation, 8. in charge of everything."

Now when the writer says everything is under the control of man, he means everything. But as we look at the situation right now, do we see everything under man's control? No, we don't.



MAN. Having sounded his first warning (vss. 1-4), our writer now returns to his subject, i.e., Jesus' superiority over the angels. He will now show that the world to come (a theme pervading the book of Hebrews) will not be in the hands of angels, but of Christ. The Jews looked on Jesus as merely a man, One Who suffered and died like any other man. And they were correct, He was like other men, for the humanity of

Jesus is as real as His divinity. Seen in His humanity, the Lord does appear to be lower than the angels who gave Israel the Law. So to prove in a different way that Jesus is greater than the angels, our writer reaches into the O. T. again to show that man, not angels will rule the world to come—and one man in particular, Jesus! This time he selects the 8th Psalm (vss. 6-8). Now many think these verses refer to the Messiah, but that is not the case. It is referring to man and man only. Because of the reference to the son of man, it is thought that it is speaking of Jesus, because He took that title for Himself. But “son of man” is simply a Hebrew expression meaning MAN. In the 80 times this phrase is used in Ezekiel, it refers always to the prophet Ezekiel. Now this 8th Psalm is a poem to the glory of man—as **God meant it to be**. What we’re reading then, is a tribute to the greatness God had in mind for man when He made him. It is a greatness which would have been realized had not Adam fallen and sin entered the human race. Even so the greatness of man will still be achieved, **but only in Christ**, the second Adam. The 8th Psalm will be fulfilled in man because Jesus became a man.



LOWER. The expression “lower than the angels,” as it appears in vs. 7 above, reads differently in the Hebrew. If you were reading the NAS version, it would say that man is made a little lower than “Elohim.” That is the Hebrew word for God. The passage can be translated, “You have made him a little less than God,” which gives us an idea of the high place God has awarded man. However, since our writer is showing the superiority of Jesus over the angels, he prefers to use the Greek text (LXX) which reads, “angels.” But nothing could be more clear than the fact that God meant for man to have dominion over everything. In the 8th Psalm 3 things are mentioned in connection with God’s purpose in man: (1) he is made a little less than divine; (2) he has been crowned with glory and honor; (3) he has been set over the works of God’s hands. Obviously that Scripture hasn’t been ful-

filled. Man is far from what God intended him to be. He does NOT have dominion over everything. He can't even rule himself, let alone the world. He's weak, crumbles before temptations, and circumstances of all kinds overwhelm him. Regardless of what Scripture says of him, man is a far cry from what he ought to be. In surrendering to Satan, Adam lost the sovereignty God gave him. He yielded up the scepter and gave control of all that God had given him over to the devil. Yet, God's purpose in man will stand. Man's failure does not rescind God's program. Man will still rule over ALL THINGS, but that dominion will only be realized through the One Man CHRIST JESUS—as we're about to see.

9. Ah, but what we do see is this: a Man Who for a time was made lower than the angels, but Who at this moment is crowned with glory and honor! I mean Jesus. He was thus exalted because of the death He suffered. You see it was God's gracious plan that when He died, Jesus would taste death on behalf of every man.



JESUS. Bear in mind the mess that man has made of things through his weakness and sin. And then into that mess steps **another Man**—Jesus. It is fitting that the writer uses the Lord's human name, for it is AS A MAN that He did all that is said of Him. Now this Man did what the first man (Adam) failed to do—refused evil. He would not yield to sin, because He loved righteousness and hated evil. Because He wouldn't submit to sin, the world killed Him. He was "obedient unto death." That's something Adam was NOT. Because He preferred death to evil, this MAN was crowned with glory and honor. So we do have a MAN Who fulfills the high place God describes in the 8th Psalm. He is worthy to rule because He proved that He could RULE HIMSELF. A man who can rule himself is worthy to rule over others. Note that our writer says that Jesus also was made "lower than the angels" for a time. Angels don't

get tired, neither do they eat or sleep. Jesus did. Angels cannot be tempted, but Jesus was. Angels do not suffer death, but Jesus did. He was clearly "lower" for a time. Jesus became a man by emptying Himself of the attributes of majesty. He allowed Himself to be born in the human stream. He endured this humiliation so that He could die **AS A MAN**. It was as a **MAN** that He rejected evil. It was as a man that He died rather than sin. It was a **MAN** Who was exalted to God's right hand, the place of supreme power. And it is a **MAN** Who is coming back again as the King of Kings! We're inclined to be so defensive about the deity of our Lord that we forget He rules in heaven right now as a **MAN**.



TASTE. Now this **MAN**, says our writer, tasted death for every man. The word "taste" should not be understood to mean that He didn't experience death in the fullest sense. He did experience death, and



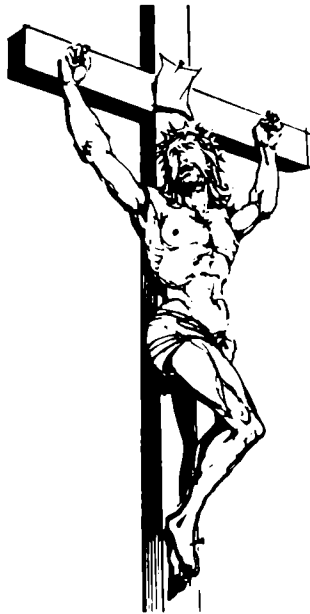
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While Jesus was on the cross He suffered **SPIRITUAL** death, the true wages of sin. Yes He died physically, as the result of His obedience, but it was **SPIRITUAL DEATH** that He tasted for every man.

more. He died TWICE! That is, He died physically and spiritually. While Jesus was on the cross He suffered SPIRITUAL death, the true wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). Yes, He died physically, as the result of His obedience. But it was **spiritual death** that He tasted for every man.

JESUS' TWO DEATHS AT CALVARY

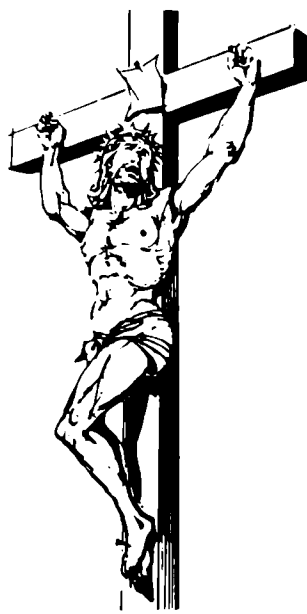
SPIRITUAL DEATH



Death FOR sin

"My God, why hast
Thou forsaken Me?"
Matt. 27:46

PHYSICAL DEATH



Death TO sin

"Father, into Thy
hands I commend
My spirit." Luke 23:46

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). But is it physical death? No. A person's body doesn't sin. It is the man living inside the body who sins. Sin is a spiritual matter. Physical death is merely a by-product of the spiritual death that has already taken place in sinners. Only in a secondary sense can we say that the "wages of sin" is physical death. Therefore in order for Jesus to die a death that would atone for sin, He had to die spiritually. He did that on the cross when He cried, "My God! My God!" His spiritual separation from God, as a MAN, occurred then. Shortly the atonement was over and He cried, "It is finished!" Only then would He say, "Father into Thy hands. . . etc." When we receive Christ, we receive both His spiritual death and righteous life. God accepts His death in place of ours, and restores us to life through Him (Eph. 2:1, 5).

His physical death was **not** substitutionary, for we all die physically. Every man goes through physical death for himself. However "taste" is an accurate word. Jesus experienced spiritual death for only a short time. He truly died that death, but it was just a "taste." He didn't remain spiritually dead. While we don't understand **HOW** He did it, we do know **WHEN**. His words from the cross tell us. At noon on the day of crucifixion, the sky became darkened. Then at 3 p. m., He gave that awful cry. . . "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me!" (Matt. 27:46). In that moment our sins were laid on Him and "He became sin for us. . ." (2 Cor. 5:21). Since sin separates men from God, the **MAN** Christ Jesus suffered spiritual death that instant. Now that is the atonement. That's when Jesus paid for our sins. The job was done and He said so. "It is finished!" (John 19:30). But He was **STILL** alive on the cross. Then we find Him **back in fellowship** with God as He cries, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" (Lu. 23:46). Jesus then dismissed His spirit and died physically. Thus He experienced **TWO KINDS** of death—as a **MAN**, spiritual and physical. It was spiritual death that he "tasted" for every man. As a result, all who believe in Him and receive Him as Savior, will **NEVER** have to face spiritual death (John 11:26). They won't even have to "taste" it.

"Was it fair to make one Man taste spiritual death for all others?"

10. It was perfectly right for God, Who made all things and for Whom all things exist, to bring many sons to glory, even if it meant that Jesus had to suffer. It was through His sufferings, you see, that Jesus was perfected as a Savior and able to be the Pioneer of our salvation.



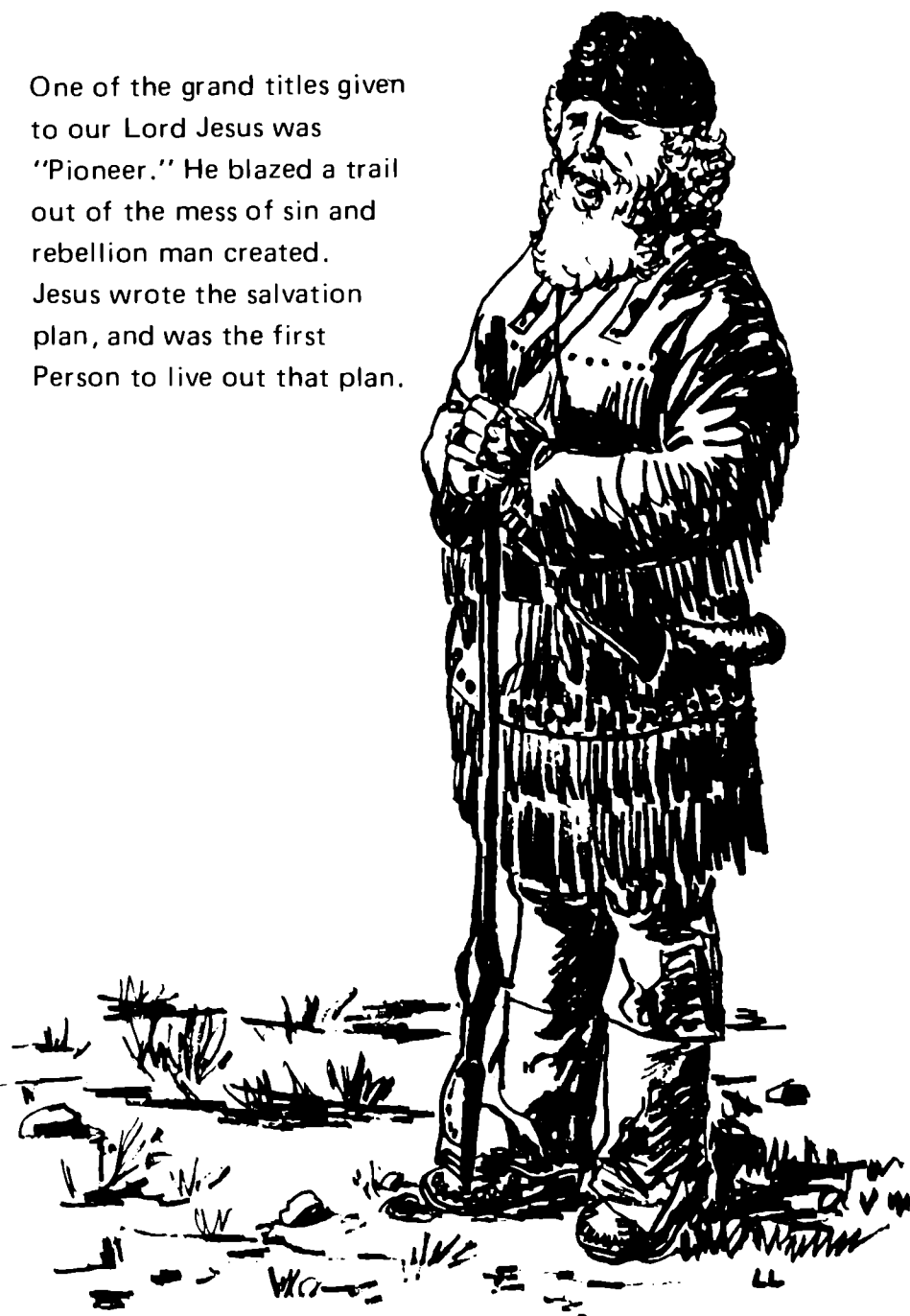
RIGHT. Some might question whether or not it was right for God to send Jesus and make Him suffer in our stead. Man is ever challenging the motives of the God Who made him, and our writer anti-

cipates this. He says it was perfectly right for God to have Jesus suffer spiritual death in our place. Why? The action was consistent with God's own nature. Now it's true He is the supreme ruler of the universes and they exist for His benefit alone and He has a perfect right to do as He pleases. But that's not why He sent Jesus. God is a **GIVER by nature**. He is a loving and compassionate Person. His own nature **MOVED** Him to act on man's behalf. That's why the Lord came. God is in love with man, has been ever since the day He made him. Why? Man is just like God, His own image. He is designed to receive and return the love of God. God is a God of love, you see. That is why He made man in the first place—He needed someone to love. It's no fun being a God of love with no one to love. So God made man like Himself, put him on earth and gave him a free will. Then God would reveal Himself to man and as many as **WANTED HIM** could come to Him. But sadly, man wanted to do his own thing. So all mankind was lost to God. Then—out of a heart of love (His own nature compelling Him to do so) God put into execution a plan that would lead many sons out of this mess and into His glory. That plan called for **ONE MAN** to come and do what the first man failed to do. The only Person eligible for the job was His own Son—Jesus!



PIONEER. We come to one of the grand titles given to our Lord Jesus—"Pioneer." In Gk. the word is "archegos." By definition, an archegos is someone who blazes a trail that others might follow him. That's what Jesus came to do: blaze a trail out of the mess of sin and rebellion man created for himself. The same word is rendered, "captain," in the KJV. The Revised renders it as "author." It can also be founder, originator or leader, for all have essentially the same idea. Jesus came into this world and pioneered a new way of walking before God—the Christian life. Jesus wrote the salvation plan, and was the first Person to live out that plan. He was, in fact, the first Christian. As the "Pioneer," Jesus was the first Person to be born of God

One of the grand titles given to our Lord Jesus was "Pioneer." He blazed a trail out of the mess of sin and rebellion man created. Jesus wrote the salvation plan, and was the first Person to live out that plan.



(Luke 1:35). Before His birth it was announced that the Spirit would be His Father. Yet, because He was born of Mary, He received from her a **human nature**, one every bit as human as yours or mine. Thus He had two natures: one from the Holy Spirit (the divine nature) and one from Mary (the human nature). He was the first Person

to live a life on earth with two natures. That's how He pioneered the Christian life. Now you and I are born with but one nature, the human nature. That's why we have to be born again. When we receive Christ (born again) we become partakers of the divine nature and then have TWO natures (2 Pet. 1:4). When that happens, we're equipped to follow Jesus and go through this life as He did.



PERFECTED. It sounds strange, doesn't it, to think of Jesus as needing to be perfected? Since we know He was God in human form, it is hard for us to think that He needed to be perfected in anything. But the truth is, God had never been a Man before. He had never been in the position of having to OBEY before. Beyond that, God had never been tempted before. When did God ever suffer or go through death? All these things God had to learn. . . AS A MAN. Until He went through them, as a man, He couldn't be man's Savior. There would be no way for Jesus to represent man unless He could sympathize with man's situation. And there was no way for Him to do that, short of becoming a Man and going through all that every other man goes through. Therefore Jesus not only died for us, but He also suffered the same trials and temptations that come against us. It was in doing that, that He was perfected as a Savior. Without the **complete** human experience, the Lord could never stand before God as man's High Priest. But having gone through it, He could sympathize fully with those He represented. Thus we conclude that Jesus suffered everything we suffer—nothing withheld. His human nature was no different from ours, allowing Him to experience human life precisely as we do. It was going through the human experience that perfected Him as our Savior. Without it, He never would have qualified, even though He was God.

11. Now that Jesus has come into our hearts and made us holy, our relationship to God is the same as His. Therefore both He and we, Son and sons, have

the same Father. For that reason He is not ashamed to own us as His brethren. 12. We observe this in the Psalms where it says:

"I will proclaim Your glory, Father, to My brothers and sisters; and together we will sing Your praises!" (Psa. 22:22).

13. And in another place:

46

"I, too, will put My trust in God!" (Isa. 8:17 LXX).

And again:

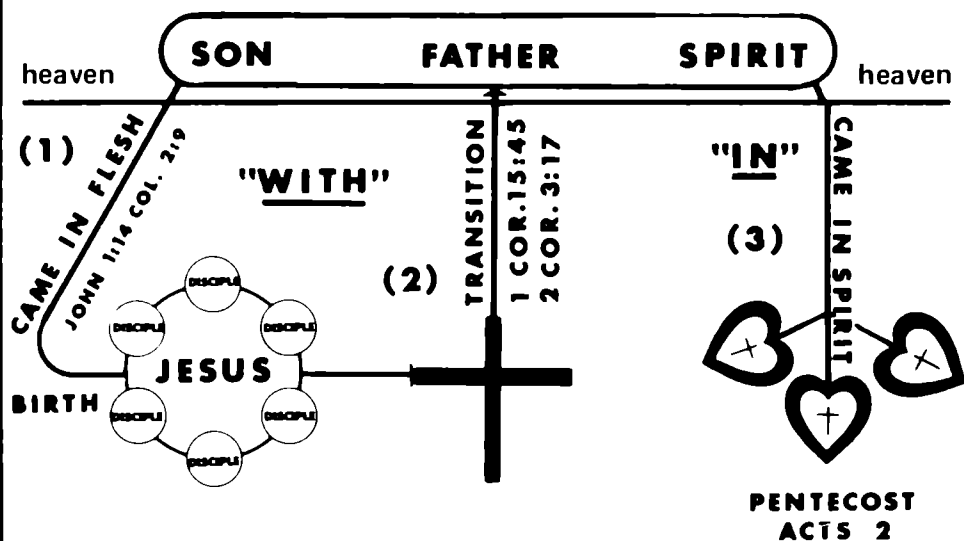
"Here I am with the children which God has given Me!" (Isa. 8:18).



RELATIONSHIP. We come now to another remarkable statement by our author. He says that Jesus and Christians are **BROTHERS**, having the **SAME** Father. This is true, for Christians are the children of God **BY BIRTH**. Now there is a sense in which people speak of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God, but in no way does this passage imply that Jesus is an elder brother to all men. The Lord Himself made it perfectly clear that only those "born of the Spirit" could enter heaven, only they can be His brothers (John 3:5). It is clearly stated elsewhere that those merely born of the flesh are **NOT** sons of God (John 1:12,13). To stand in the presence of God a man has to be made holy. A sinner can no more make himself holy than a brain surgeon can operate on his own brain. It's something that has to be done for man. And it **IS** done for man when he puts his trust in Jesus. How? When a person opens his heart to Christ, his soul becomes pregnant with the life of God that instant. Even though he can't feel it (because it is a spiritual event) a genuine conception takes place. There's a sense in which the human body then becomes a large womb for the new **creation** which has been conceived. The new creation ("new man") is

begotten by the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9b, 2 Cor. 5:17). This new creation has its own nature, the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The believer, equipped with God's nature, becomes God's son as truly as was Jesus in the womb of Mary. Both are born of the same Spirit and share the same life. This is why Jesus is not ashamed to acknowledge the believer as His brother—they belong to the same family.

HOW GOD'S SONS ARE CONCEIVED



When Jesus was on earth with His disciples, HE was not available. No one could HAVE Christ then. After He finished the atonement on the cross, He made a change to the Spirit, so that as the "life-giving Spirit" He would be available (1 Cor. 15:45). At Pentecost He returned in the Spirit to enter the hearts of all those willing to receive Him. When people hear the gospel and invite Jesus into their hearts, He comes into them via the Holy Spirit. That's when they become pregnant with God's own life. The soul is like a fertilized egg. The person who is thus fertilized by the Spirit of Christ, is then God's child and is equipped with the divine nature that instant. From then on he can walk as Jesus walked—if he wants to. The new nature gives believers the power to live godly, but it does not affect their wills in any way. A man must WILL to be like Christ. If he does, then God's power goes to work within him to help him. If he doesn't, his life will not change.



PSALMS. Having said that Jesus and the believer have the **SAME** Father, the writer to the Hebrews means to prove that Christ did **NOT** come to earth as God **INCOGNITO**. He was in every way a man, even as you and I. For proof he turns again to the O. T. and comes up with three quotations which he puts in the lips of Jesus. The first is from the 22nd Psalm. We know the Psalm is Messianic, for it opens with the same words that Jesus cried from the cross. . . "My God! My God! . . . etc.!" In the 22nd verse of that Psalm, Jesus (through David) is seen proclaiming God's glory to His "brothers and sisters." In the second line of that same verse, Jesus is seen with those brothers and sisters **AS A MAN**, praising God along with them. The writer feels it is perfectly proper to put these words on Jesus' lips. So should we, if we believe in the inspiration of Scripture. True, David wrote these lines originally, but only as inspired by the Lord (the pre-incarnate Spirit of Christ). The Lord guided David so that his Psalm not only applied to David's situation, but was also prophetic and had a fuller application in Jesus Himself. Thus our Lord indicated in the O. T. that He would come to earth as a **MAN**, die as a Man, and be able to rejoice with those whom His death delivered from sin.



ANOTHER PLACE. The writer's 2nd and 3rd quotes come from Isa. 8:17 and 18. They are separated in our text because each makes a different point. While the prophet is naturally speaking of his own dependence on God, inspiration again demands that we see the words as applied to Jesus **as a Man**. Thus, when it says, "I, too, will put My trust in God," we see our Savior in the same place of faith and trust as we are. He is speaking as a Christian. In our Lord's earthly life it was as necessary for Him to put His trust in the Father as it is for us. If He had any advantage over us at all, we couldn't follow His example. The Lord Jesus depended on the Father for everything. Even His miracles were **NOT** done in His own power. He stated that fact often

(John 5:30). So, as MAN, Jesus was just as dependent on God as we are. Now in Isa. 8:18 (vs. 13 in our text) a new thought is introduced. The prophet is speaking of his own children. But when carried forward by inspiration, we find Jesus speaking of the children God has given Him. (This is the only book in the N. T. that refers to us as the children of Christ). Even though He is truly our elder brother, it is also true that we are born again by His Spirit (the Spirit of Christ). Since the Spirit of Christ is also the Spirit of God, we are also the children of God (1 John 3:1,2). But the writer wants to show Jesus as the head of a new family of **redeemed sons**, just as Adam was the head of the family of sinners. That's the writer's purpose in quoting it.

"Can we say, then, that Man's redemption depends on Jesus being a Man?"

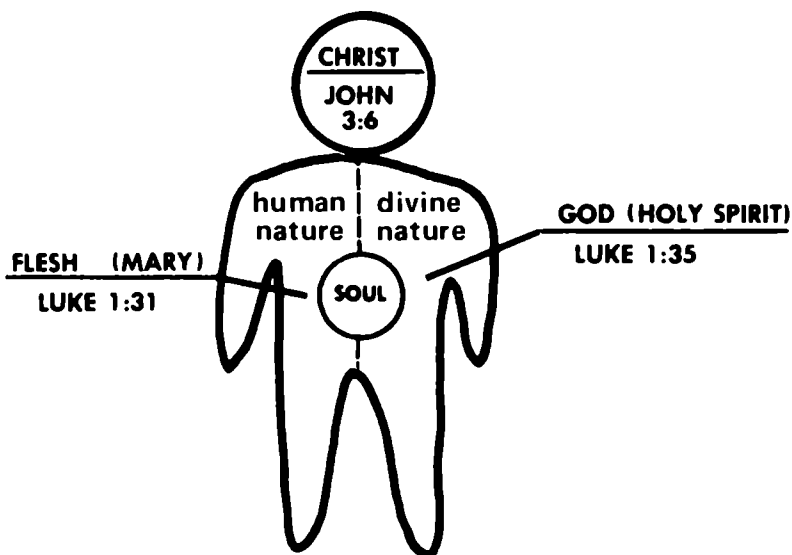
14. Since the children of Christ share a common inheritance of flesh and blood, Jesus had to enter into that same inheritance in order to share in their human nature. For it was only by dying as a MAN that He could cancel the power of the devil, who rules the realm of death. 15. It was by His death, you see, that He was able to release those who were slaves all their lives because they feared death so much.



SHARE. To be man's representative at the cross and in heaven, our writer insists that Jesus had to partake of flesh and blood. The term "flesh and blood" is a common expression for **human nature**. It does not mean simply the taking on of a body. For the Lord to take on a body and nothing else, makes Him "the angel of the Lord," and NOT a man. He appeared numerous times in the O. T. in human form, but never as a man (Gen. 18:1,2; 32:24-30). To be a MAN, Jesus had to be born the same as we are. He had to enter the human stream and acquire the nature handed down to all men from Adam. You see it is not his body that gets

man into trouble. It's his evil, carnal nature. It is at the point of his sinful nature that man needs help. It is his nature that makes him a sinner, not his body. Therefore, to help man at the point of his need, it was necessary for the Lord to enter the human stream via physical birth and grow up the same as everyone else (Luke 2:52). He grew, learned things, went through trials and faced the same temptations we face. Any talk that He couldn't sin is nonsense. He could have easily sinned, but refused.

CHRIST'S TWO NATURES



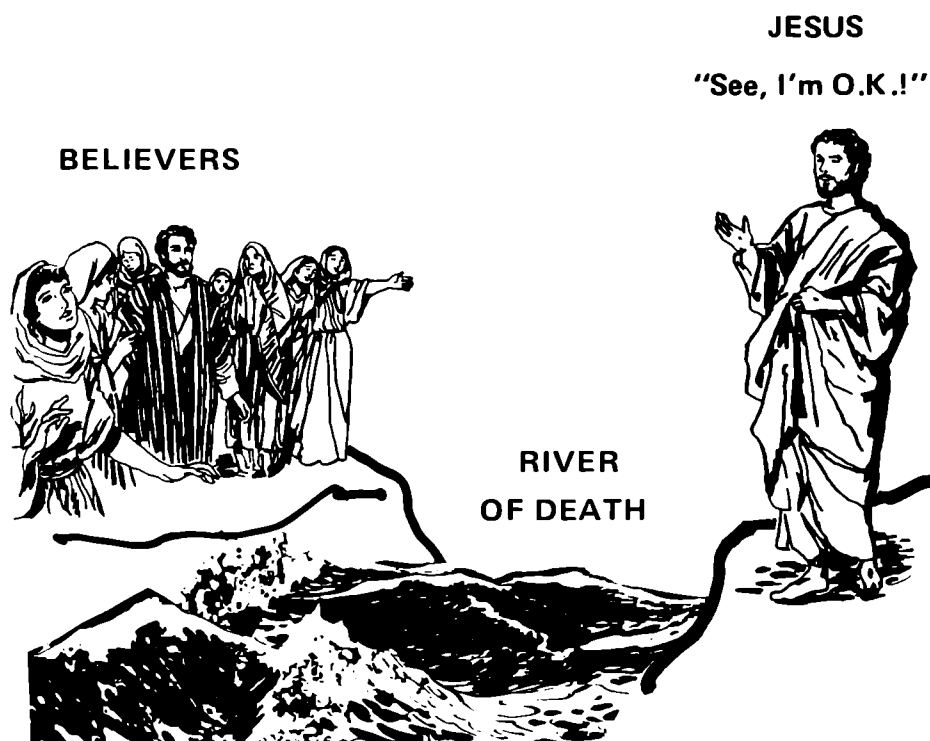
Some do not like the idea that Jesus had the same nature we do. They would put Him in a sterile compartment and isolate Him from sin. But Jesus can't be separated from us and still save us. From Mary, His mother, He received a nature as prone to sin as yours or mine. He could sin. That nature was the **same** carnal nature we inherit from Adam. Then, from the Holy Spirit, and that's what is unique about Him, He received the divine nature, **which cannot sin**. Equipped with these two natures, He went through life faced with the choice of which nature to obey. He lived in the "valley of decision." He chose NEVER to sin. He was tempted often, yet He was totally without sin (Heb. 4:15). What a Man! What a Savior! It is because He experienced the POWER of sin through His human nature that He can sympathize with our weakness and be our High Priest. Without that experience He couldn't possibly know what we go through and could not represent us before God. Please observe that HAVING the human nature does not make one a sinner, it is YIELDING to it that makes him a sinner. Jesus never once yielded to His human nature.

Even when His human nature powerfully tempted Him, He **willed** NOT to sin. This is the way that Christ dealt with His human nature. He refused to yield to it. This is what makes Him so remarkable. Were it impossible for Him to sin, He could not be our example. We'd never be able to follow "in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). We couldn't follow a Man who could not sin.



CANCEL. Our writer gives us another reason why it was necessary for Jesus to become a man—to cancel Satan's power over believers and release them from the fear of death. Please note that Jesus did NOT destroy the devil as stated in the KJV. Satan is still in business and we're told to resist him (Ja. 4:7). Jesus didn't even take away any of his power. What He did do, was give us a nature that Satan couldn't touch, and thereby take away his chief weapon—the fear of death. Since all men have the fallen, human nature—the devil has access to them. Adam gave him that right. Consequently it is easy for him to get people to sin. With his knowledge of human weakness, Satan can provide perfect temptations to match every weakness. Thus he can manipulate people and lead them to sin. When they do, the Holy Spirit convicts them of it. It's His job (John 16:8). This is why men come to fear death. They sense that punishment awaits them on the other side of death. So to disarm the devil of this weapon (the fear of death) Jesus did two things: (1) He went to the cross as our sinless substitute and bore the penalty for our sins Himself. That removes from us the **fear of punishment** after death. (2) Then to take away the fear of physical death itself, He went through the experience and proved it to be harmless. By His resurrection He proved that death has no effect whatsoever on the soul of a person. This fear of death is a most powerful weapon. Because of this fear, many men will consent to do things that nothing else would compel them to do. Put a gun to the average man's head, and he'll cry, "I'll do anything, but please don't kill me!" Men would rather sin than die. But praise God, our Savior would rather die than sin!

THE VICTOR OVER DEATH



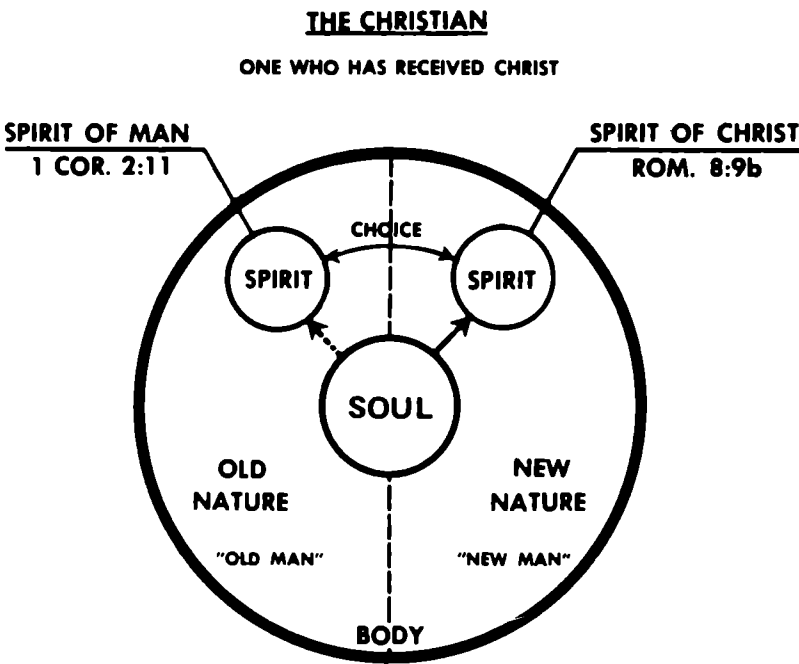
Picture death as a river. See Jesus standing on the **other side** of that river. Then see all the people standing on the opposite bank, afraid to plunge in. By His death and resurrection, Jesus has already jumped in and gone through the experience. He stands on the other side calling to His brethren, "Come on fellows, there's nothing to it! See, I'm OK. Death didn't hurt me a bit!" (Rev. 1:17, 18). By passing through **physical death** and rising unharmed, the Lord proved that physical death is harmless. Natural man shudders at the thought of death. Passing a cemetery can give him cold chills. From the time he was born he lives in fear of it, dreading even a trip to the doctor for fear of what he might learn. The human race has lived in this bondage from the beginning. The believer, on the other hand, should have no such fear. His sins are washed away in the blood of Jesus so that no punishment awaits him. And the Lord's resurrection tells him that the experience of death doesn't hurt a bit!



RELEASE. Just how is a believer released from Satan's power? By the receipt of the divine nature. When men are born into this world, they have but one nature—the fallen, carnal nature. The baby in the crib displays that nature. He grabs for what he wants and

fusses when he can't have it—and that nature never changes until the day he dies. This nature, transmitted down the human stream from Adam, is Satan's territory. Adam gave it to him. He had a LEGAL right to approach any man through the old nature and stir up any desires he can. Ingenious when it comes to tempting people, the devil can put ideas in people's minds that coincide with

HOW SATAN'S POWER IS BROKEN



When we receive the "Spirit of Christ" (Holy Spirit), we become partakers of the divine nature that instant (2 Pet. 1:4). We then have two natures, the old and the new. The SOUL (the person) is then FREE to choose which nature will dominate his thinking and behavior. If he submits to the old nature, the works of the flesh will be manifested through his body (Gal. 5:19-21). If he submits to his new nature, he will exhibit the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). But until a man is saved his only freedom is the DEGREE to which he will sin. Why? That fallen nature is ungodly. No matter how nice a person might seem to be, he has no desire to please God. There simply is NO WAY to please God until one has the divine nature and there is no way to receive it without receiving Christ. It is HIS nature.

the demands of their flesh. Until a man is saved, there is nothing he can do but sin. Why? That old nature cannot produce anything but sin. Equipped with a nature which responds only to satanic suggestion, a man remains under the dominion of the devil. Ah, but when he opens his heart to Christ, he receives a NEW nature, Christ's OWN victorious nature. Now THAT nature **cannot sin**. The believer is no longer under the exclusive dominion of the devil, because he can now submit to his new nature and do that which pleases God. He is FREE to choose **which nature** will dominate his life. Yes, he can still yield to his old nature if he wants to, but the point is—he no longer HAS TO. Whereas the unsaved man can ONLY sin, the believer doesn't have to. Beyond that, the SOUL of the believer is transferred from Satan's kingdom, the realm of death, and into Christ's kingdom, the realm of life (Col. 1:13). As God's child, the believer goes through the rest of his life deciding WHICH NATURE is going to control his thoughts and actions. Free from the exclusive dominion of Satan, he can walk as Jesus walked.

"Just how does Jesus' humanity help us?"

16. Since the Lord did not assume the nature of angels, it is obvious He didn't come to help them. Very clearly His mission was to redeem the seed of Abraham.



ANGELS. We come to the writer's last contrast of Christ with the angels. When the Son of God humbled Himself to be our Redeemer. He went right by the realm of angels and descended to the level of man. He did not become an angel to deliver angels, but a Man to deliver men. **There is no redemption plan for angels.** They were given their choice when Satan conspired to overthrow God's throne. Those who elected to follow the devil, were judged and consigned to his fate. We call these "fallen angels" or "evil spirits." Those who refused to follow Satan, made their decision. That decision stands

and they are called the “holy angels,” or the “elect angels.” Whatever their part is in God’s program, they appear to be expendable. But man is not. He is the IMAGE of God and God loves him. It’s no small thing to be made in such a fashion that God can love you and you can return His love. It’s remarkable when you consider that he NEEDS our love. So when Jesus came to redeem man, He bypassed the angelic level and stooped down to the level of freewill sinners. There is no way to explain this action except to agree that, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. . .” God was in love with man, not angels.



SEED. There is no way for anyone to become a man without being born into a particular nation and family. So when it came time for Jesus to become a man and receive the human nature, He was born a Jew, i.e., the “seed of Abraham.” When the Lord began His earthly ministry, He did not go to the world, but to Israel only. He had no ministry to the Gentiles at all. After He was crucified by His own people, He then took the gospel to the Gentiles through His apostles. When a Gentile receives the “Spirit of Christ,” he is baptized (Spirit baptism) INTO CHRIST. Once a man is in Christ, he is then Abraham’s seed. This is why Paul told his Gentile readers, “If ye be Christ’s, then ye are **Abraham’s seed** and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). All those who exercise believing faith toward the Lord are regarded as Abraham’s seed. Whether O. T. or N. T. believers, there is but one family of God. However, because our writer is addressing Jews he uses the title, “seed of Abraham.” They liked the idea that Jesus came into the world as a Jew to redeem Jews first, and then the Gentiles. Also our writer is about to speak of the Jewish system of worship, with particular reference to the high priest. Because of their training and tradition, the Jewish Christians understood that sin could only be cared for by a priest who presented an acceptable offering to God for the removal of sins. To them, it would be exciting to learn that JESUS was their true

High Priest, and that by the sacrifice of Himself, He wiped out their sins and brought them into everlasting fellowship with God.

17. To do that, He had to have a nature like His brothers and become like them in every way. Only by this means could He become a compassionate and faithful High Priest before God, and remove the sins that blocked their fellowship with Him. 18. Since He himself was tested by suffering and temptation, He knows what we're going through and is able to help us, now that it is our turn to suffer and be tempted.



HIGH PRIEST. We come now to the first mention of Jesus as our High Priest. It is the first time this title is applied to Him directly in the Bible. Note that He is NOT called "A" priest, but the HIGH priest. The writer is thinking of the chief priest of Israel and his yearly act of going into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. No one else was allowed in the tent as he performed the ceremony. It was something he did by himself. Now the primary task of the Jewish high priest was to reconcile the people to God by removing their sins. In early times, the people were afraid of being killed as they approached to worship God. If the high priest didn't do his job just right, God's anger would break through upon the people. But if he performed the ritual exactly as prescribed, God's wrath would be removed and the people could draw nigh without fear. The readers of this letter were familiar with the role of the high priest of Israel. It was therefore precious to consider that Jesus had gone into heaven (the holiest of all) with His sacrifice to put away the sins of the people. And because He did His job just right, their sins were removed and they could approach God without fear. This is why God was so insistent that the O. T. priests performed the ritual so precisely. It pictured the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus to do everything the Father asked of Him.



FAITHFUL/COMPASSIONATE. In His office as High Priest, the Lord Jesus has a ministry to BOTH God and man. He did not become our High Priest at Calvary. From birth He was destined to be our High Priest. All during His life He was faithful to do everything needed to prepare Himself as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Then, just as the Jewish high priest offered sacrifices to God, Jesus offered Himself. Ah, but He also ministers to man. That ministry is one of compassion. He is able to do this because, as a man, He learned **by experience** all about human weakness and temptation. Having suffered these things Himself, He can sympathize with our weaknesses. Now this was another exciting idea for his Jewish readers. The priests of the O. T. were not merciful and references are made throughout the Scriptures to their lack of sympathy for the people. In Jesus' day, the Sadducees were in power. They were notoriously greedy and cruel. The words, "compassionate High Priest" were calculated to make Jesus far more appealing than the Aaronic priesthood which was clearly lacking in mercy and sympathy. For that reason alone, it would be foolish for them to think of forsaking Christianity and returning to Judaism. Who could sympathize with them like Jesus?



HE KNOWS. Jesus knows how we feel. He's been through everything we experience in the way of suffering and temptation—and more. This is important to see: He didn't have to sin in order to sympathize with us as sinners. His understanding of our situation is based on the **strength of temptation to sin**. In that He never sinned, He knows the **FULL FORCE** of temptation. You and I yield before temptation reaches its peak. But Jesus didn't. He was faithful to go all the way, even to death before He'd yield to temptation. Now there was one area for Jesus that gave the devil his greatest opportunity—the **cross**. For another man it might be money, another sex, but for Jesus it was having to die. The devil kept suggesting, "There must be an easier way

to accomplish the same thing!" We have to remember that Jesus lived in death row. The one thing that would sound good to a man on death row was—"You don't have to die." So in the wilderness temptation, the devil offered Jesus a way out. All He had to do was worship Satan and the devil would GIVE Him all that He had come to redeem (Matt. 4:9). In one way or another, the Lord's friends sought to keep Him from going to the cross. When Peter made the same suggestion, he got the same rebuke as Satan (Mk. 8:33). But Jesus wouldn't let anything overpower Him. He set His face like flint for Calvary. Regardless of the cost in pain and persecution, He was determined to please His Father and NOT Himself. Jesus didn't have to sample various forms of temptation. Temptation is temptation, regardless of the form it takes—and He experienced the fulness of it. The Jewish readers of this letter were beginning to suffer the same temptation as did Jesus—giving up their faith in Him **because of persecution**. How thrilling to read that their victorious High Priest would understand their feelings, having gone through the same testing Himself. Thus the fact that Jesus was "lower than the angels" for a time, didn't make Him inferior to them. By His suffering and death, He was qualified to do for man what no angel could ever do—**sympathize and save!**

"Will our writer show that Jesus is greater than Moses?"

3 1. So then, holy brothers, who now share in the heavenly call, take a hard look at Jesus and consider Him in His twofold office of God's Apostle and the High Priest of the faith we profess. 2. Observe that He was faithful to God, Who appointed Him to these roles, even as Moses was faithful in the management of God's household.



SO THEN. Keep in mind that our writer is writing to Jewish Christians to convince them of the folly of forsaking Christ for Judaism. To show them how foolish that would be, he has been taking the most


sacred elements of the Jew's religion and comparing them with Christ. First, he showed that Jesus was superior to the prophets. Then he proved that He was superior to the angels. Now he means to show that He is superior to Moses. To us this might seem a needless comparison. We think of Jesus as God in the flesh, superior to everyone. But remember that our writer is also presenting Him as a **Man**. As men go, the Jews regarded Moses as the greatest in the world—surpassing the prophets and the angels. He was the one who spoke directly to God as “a man speaks to his friend.” While angels may have been used to transmit the 10 Commandments, Moses and the Law were one and the same thing to the Jewish people. So presenting Jesus as superior to Moses was a ticklish job for the writer. His strategy is to do it in such a way that Moses is not downgraded. He begins by observing that BOTH Jesus and Moses were faithful in the roles assigned them. It would be hard for the Jewish mind to conceive of any MAN who could be closer to God than Moses, but that's exactly what our writer means to show. He starts off by putting them in the same category of faithfulness.




HOLY BROTHERS. As he moves into his comparison of Jesus and Moses, our writer addresses the Jewish Christians by an unusual name...“holy brothers.” This is a combination of two Gk. words not found anyplace else in the N.T. He is thinking of what he said in Ch. 2:11 and how they are brothers of Jesus. They're his brothers because they are born into God's family by the “Spirit of Christ ” They are also holy, but not in the sense of sinlessness. They are holy, because their lives, having been bought by the blood of Jesus, **now belong to God**. They are set apart unto Him. As God's children, they are **HEIRS** to a whole new world. With their lives no longer their own, they are to shed any affection for this world. They are to shift their focus to heaven—their new home. Having received the Lord's own **HOLY** nature, they can live lives worthy of their heavenly call. But to do that, they have to fix their eyes on Jesus and realize what they have in Him. If they start looking

at their trials and persecutions (something they were doing), they could forget their heavenly calling and compromise with the world. Likely they would return to Judaism as a first step. If they do, they will forfeit the opportunity to **get ready** to live with the Lord in heaven. The hard fact is, those who neglect this amazing salvation will be shocked to learn what it has cost them to ignore their heavenly calling and live for themselves. When it comes time to give an account of this wonderful new life from the Lord, they will be ashamed and not able to en-

TWO FAITHFUL MEN



MOSES



JESUS

Our writer wants us to note the remarkable parallel between Moses and Jesus. Both were uniquely called as God's Apostles. The word means, "One sent with a message from God." Moses was sent on the occasion of the burning bush (Ex. 3:14; 4:12). Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you." Both were spokesmen for God, declaring only what He had revealed to them. Neither wanted anything for Himself. Both served in the capacity of high priest. It's true that Aaron, Moses' brother, was the **official** high priest of Israel, but it was Moses who served as the **true** advocate with God. It was Moses who offered his life for the people after Aaron became involved in the golden calf incident (Ex. 32:11—13:32). Jesus offered His own blood on behalf of God's people. Both were faithful to God all the days of their lives.

ter into the same JOY as those who put Christ first in everything.



HARD LOOK. Now we better understand why our writer would urge his readers to take a hard look at Jesus. Unless they grasp the significance of what He is to them, they stand a good chance of drifting back into Judaism. The word in Gk. (katanoëo) means: "to look at something in a way that permits you to catch the full significance of it." If the Jewish Christians slipped back into Judaism merely because they failed to take a good look at Christ, that would be awful. Our writer certainly doesn't want that. His purpose in writing is to prevent such a thing. So to persuade them otherwise, he asks them to take a hard look at Jesus and compare Him with Moses. The first thing he observes for them is that **BOTH WERE FAITHFUL TO GOD** in the roles assigned them. God Himself testified to the faithfulness of Moses saying, "Moses My servant...is faithful in all My house" (Num. 12:7). When it comes to the faithfulness of Jesus, that is testified to by the fact that He was exalted to God's right hand. He never would have been raised to such a place of honor had He not been faithful. Yet, while there is little difference in the faithfulness of these two men, there is a big difference in **who they are**. The Jewish readers are going to learn that Jesus is vastly superior to Moses in rank and power.

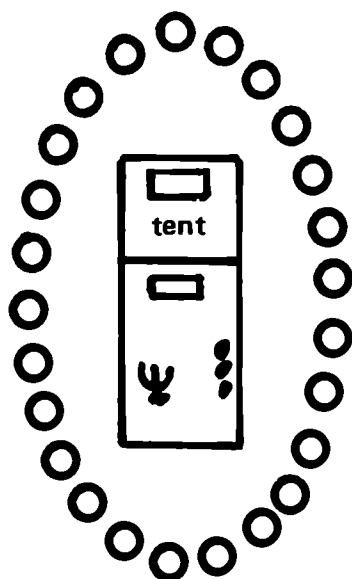
"If Jesus and Moses were both faithful, at what point was Jesus superior?"

3. Now Jesus, as the Pioneer of our salvation, founded the true house of God. And just as the man who founds a house receives more honor than any member of that house, so is Jesus worthy of more honor than Moses. 4. It's true that every house has to be established by someone. And while God's house was founded by a Man, God was the power behind it, for He is the Founder of all things.

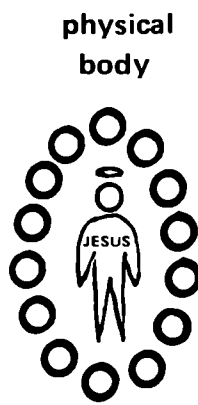


HOUSE. God has always wanted a family, a household. So He set out to build one. He is a "family man" at heart. We need, though, to trace the beginnings of God's household or the word "house" will confuse us. Until God spoke to Moses in the wilderness, the Lord never had a place among men. Yes, He made appearances to individuals such as Noah and Abraham, but there was no real place for Him in the midst of humanity. So He allowed the children of Israel to make Him a sanctuary. The wilderness tent of meeting evolved into Solo-

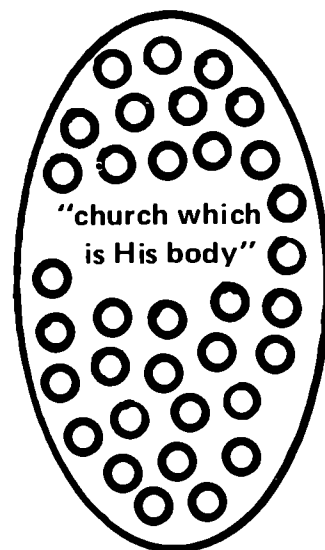
GOD'S THREE HOUSES



HANDMADE HOUSE



HUMAN HOUSE



SPIRITUAL HOUSE

Let's trace the development of God's house visually. (1) See Him first, in the midst of His people Israel. Both they, and the tabernacle they built for Him, merely prefigured the TRUE house which would be established later. It was but a "shadow" of the true (9:24). (2) In the second stage, the Lord's human body constituted God's house. Through it He was closer to those who loved Him. By His victory over evil and sacrificial death, He made it possible for believers of all ages to become the "living stones" of which God's true house is built. (3) Finally we see those who have God's life in them baptized into the ONE BODY to form God's SPIRITUAL house. Since Jesus is the Baptizer, He is the builder of God's house (Mk. 1:8; Matt. 16:18). It is Christ IN US that gives us life. It is our being IN CHRIST that makes us God's house (John 14:20).

mon's temple and finally into Herod's temple. But then the program shifted. When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He made it clear that the Jewish temple was no longer God's house (Matt. 23:38). The Lord shifted His residence to the temple of Jesus' body (John 2:21). As long as Jesus was on earth, the place of God among men was confined to the Lord's body (Col. 2:9). The third shift was made when Jesus went to the cross and made the transition from flesh to spirit. Via the Holy Spirit, He indwells believers so that their bodies become temples of the Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). In the moment of salvation, every believer is baptized into Christ, to form a single BODY, the church (I Cor. 12:13). This invisible body of true believers constitutes the true household of God, prompting Paul to say, "Ye are God's building" (I Cor. 3:9). This spiritual body is composed of ALL the saints, both Old and New Testament believers. It is a spiritual HOUSE which God inhabits through the Spirit (Eph. 2:20-22). God now has the house He wanted when He began the human program: a house made of "living stones" (I Pet. 2:5).



FOUNDER. Though Moses was used of God to prepare an earthly people and an earthly house for the Lord, the old Lawgiver was NOT the founder of God's house. Jesus was. God's house is established on the basis of Christ's finished work at Calvary, and is being added to as He baptized new believers into it. To be a part of God's house one must have the divine nature. The only way he can get it is by receiving Christ. This raises a question. How do the O.T. saints, who died believing the promises of God, receive the divine nature? They had to WAIT in Abraham's bosom (Sheol) until after Jesus died on the cross and became available in the Spirit (Luke 16:22). It was in the Spirit that the Lord went to the O.T. believers waiting in Sheol (I Pet. 3:18, 19). From there, He led all those who "died in faith" into heaven (Eph. 4:8-10). They had their "Pentecost" in the **lower room**, and were baptized into Christ before anyone on

earth received the Lord. The N.T. saints join the O.T. believers when they receive Christ, so that the house of God is made up of saints of all ages (Eph. 2:19-22;4:4-6). But since Jesus is doing this work AS A MAN, the writer wants to show that he is **not doing it for Himself**. So he observes for his readers that God is the real Builder, building His house THROUGH CHRIST. After all, He is the Founder of all things. This, of course, is but another way of saying that Christ is God. The emphasis, though, is on Jesus' work as a **Man**. God is working through Him, even as He works through us to carry out His will.

5. While Moses was indeed faithful in the house of God, his faithfulness was that of a servant. His ministry merely foreshadowed the things that God would do and say later on. 6a. But Christ, whose faithfulness matched that of Moses, was faithful as a Son in charge of God's house.



SERVANT/SON. Our writer is ready to point up the real difference between Moses and Jesus. While both were faithful to their tasks, each had a different relationship to God. Christ as the SON of God, is the Founder and Builder of God's household. But Moses was merely a SERVANT in that house. The relationship is easier to grasp if we think in terms of another house. Consider the famous banking house of Rothschild. Obviously some agent or employee built the very first bank for Mr. Rothschild. But could the builder of that initial bank possibly have the honor of Mr. Rothschild himself? So with Moses and Jesus. As the FOUNDER, Christ is vastly superior to Moses. Moses merely built the first building. Besides, his work was temporary. His ministry was "a shadow of the good things to come" (10:1). He was but a signpost pointing to the fact that a greater than he was coming. Why does our writer stress this great difference between Moses and Jesus? He wants to convince his Jewish readers that it would be a mistake to return to the "inferior" program set up by Moses. Once

they see the contrast between the SON and a SERVANT, they will realize that Moses is infinitely lower in rank than Jesus, and that following Jesus is the only way to go. What's more, it tells them that Moses' ministry is finished, having given way to the real and true house of God established by Jesus. It would be ridiculous to go back to something that had been superseded by something new and better.

heb 3

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As the Founder, Christ is vastly superior to Moses. Once they see the contrast between the SON and a SERVANT, they will realize that Moses is infinitely lower in rank than Jesus.

6b. Now just what is God's house? We are—if we cling to our confidence and display the joy that our hope inspires, right to the very end.



WE ARE. God's house consists only of those who have received the Spirit of Christ and are partakers of the divine nature. Without that nature, they could never live with a holy God nor He with them. We have seen too, that these believers are baptized into Christ to form a spiritual body, the church. This is the chief significance of Spirit baptism. Ah, but once a man is baptized into Christ, is that the end of the matter? No, it is just the beginning, God doesn't want His house composed of spiritual infants, but people who have been tested by fire and brought to maturity through the trials of this life. If they can endure this life on earth with their eyes fixed on Jesus, maintaining their confidence and joy no matter what comes against them, they are the kind of people God wants in His family. Why? They become like Him in the process. That is what will make the fellowship sweet when we are finally with Him in eternity. Unfortunately many teach that salvation is the **END** of the process, rather than the beginning. So they work to get people saved and there it stops. Because they are not grounded in the Word or taught to suffer for the Lord, they cave in when trials and tribulations hit them. They look to human resources for help, rather than thanking God for the privilege of reaching maturity through trial. When these people stand before God in the judgment, they will be saved, no question about that. But their place in God's house will not be what they were led to expect. It is a neglected truth that Christians are going to **SUFFER LOSS** at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Many of them will experience loss because they have not maintained their confidence and joy by keeping their eyes on Jesus and building themselves up in the Word of God (1 Cor. 3:15).



IF. The "IFs" of Scripture bother many readers. We can't avoid them. The book of Hebrews has more than any other and they are connected with the warnings. We should note first, that the context of the passage is Christian confidence and joy. All true be-

lievers are baptized into God's house and are His sons. **There's no way to lose that status.** But a believer can lose his confidence. If he does, he stands to lose a great deal that he might otherwise inherit at the end of his course. To keep his confidence, one must fix his eyes on the Lord Jesus and **keep them there.** If trouble (cancer for example) strikes, and he shifts his eyes to his circumstances, his confidence will vanish and he'll cringe before the devil. From then on he will lose more and more ground spiritually. Finally, he'll be a long way from fellowship with Christ. You know what that does to fruit-bearing. He'll end his days with little or no treasure laid up in heaven, and his loss will be heartbreaking (Matt. 6:20). The Jewish Christians were in such danger. Since the Lord had delayed His return and they were suffering for their faith in Him, they were strongly tempted to turn back to Judaism. After all, it had been established by God and had survived for 1400 years. The devil could make it sound like a good move. But if they return to that dead program, the joy will go out of their lives and their confidence will disappear. "Don't do it!" warns the writer. "You've got too much to lose!" There are fantastic blessings reserved for those who keep their confidence and joyfully endure to the end. Note that when the writer refers to enduring "to the end," he is speaking of the FUTURE tense of salvation, not the past tense which we call being "born-again."

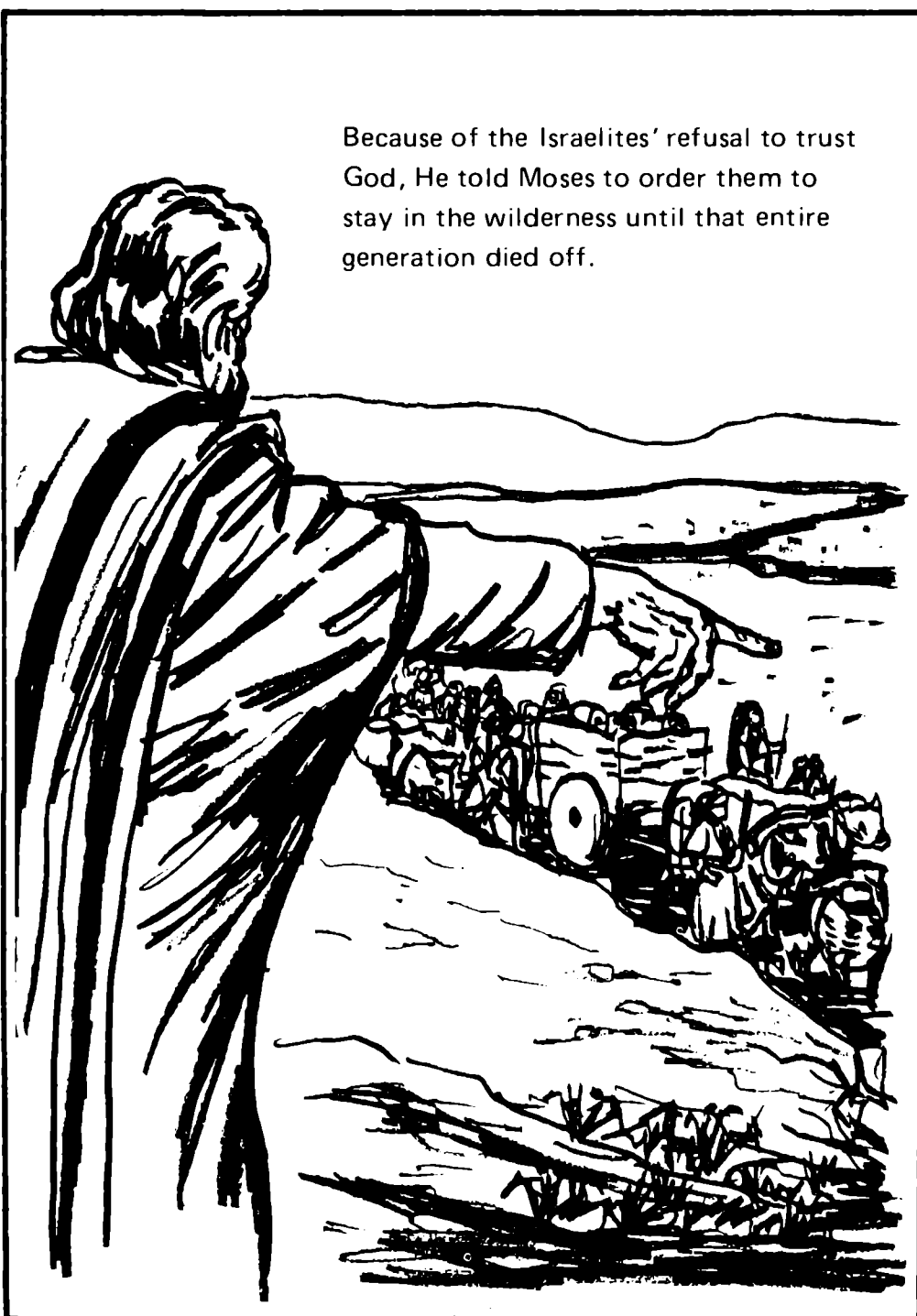
"What happens if we don't keep our confidence in Christ's Word?"

7. "Come then," says the Holy Spirit, "listen to God's voice as He speaks to you today." Here's what He is saying:

8. "Do not harden your hearts against Me as they did when they provoked me during the time of test-

ing in the desert. 9. Your fathers put Me to the test. Even though they saw the great things I did, they tried My patience during all those forty years. 10. And so I became angry with the people of that generation and I said, 'This is not My kind of people. Their hearts are set on going their own way rather than My way.' 11. So in My anger I vowed, they shall never enter into My rest."

Because of the Israelites' refusal to trust God, He told Moses to order them to stay in the wilderness until that entire generation died off.





LISTEN. Having shown that Jesus is superior to Moses, our writer is about to deliver another warning based on that truth. This will be his second warning. First he warned his readers against **drifting** from the truth of the gospel message. Now he is going to warn them against **refusing to trust the Lord** when the going gets rough. To make his warning convincing, he draws a parallel between the history of the Israelites in the wilderness and the Christians of this world. Moses was faithful to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. The plan was for him to lead them across the desert into the promised land. But the Israelites steadily lost confidence in God's promises. When they arrived at its borders, they refused to enter the land, fearing its inhabitants (Num. 14). God became angry with them. Because of their refusal to trust Him, He ordered them to stay in the wilderness until that entire generation died off. If they didn't believe He could do as promised, then He would deny them the promised land. Well, just as those wayward Israelites forfeited the blessing awaiting them, so do those who refuse to believe the promises of Jesus stand to lose the blessings reserved for them. The writer is ready to make that a firm warning, but first he selects a similar warning uttered by King David 1000 years earlier. David had warned his generation that they would lose their inheritance if they were as rebellious as their fathers were in the wilderness. Our writer picks up David's warning from Psalm 95:7-11 and makes it apply to his readers. When He says, "Listen to God's voice. . . ," he wants them to feel that God is speaking to them through the prophet David.



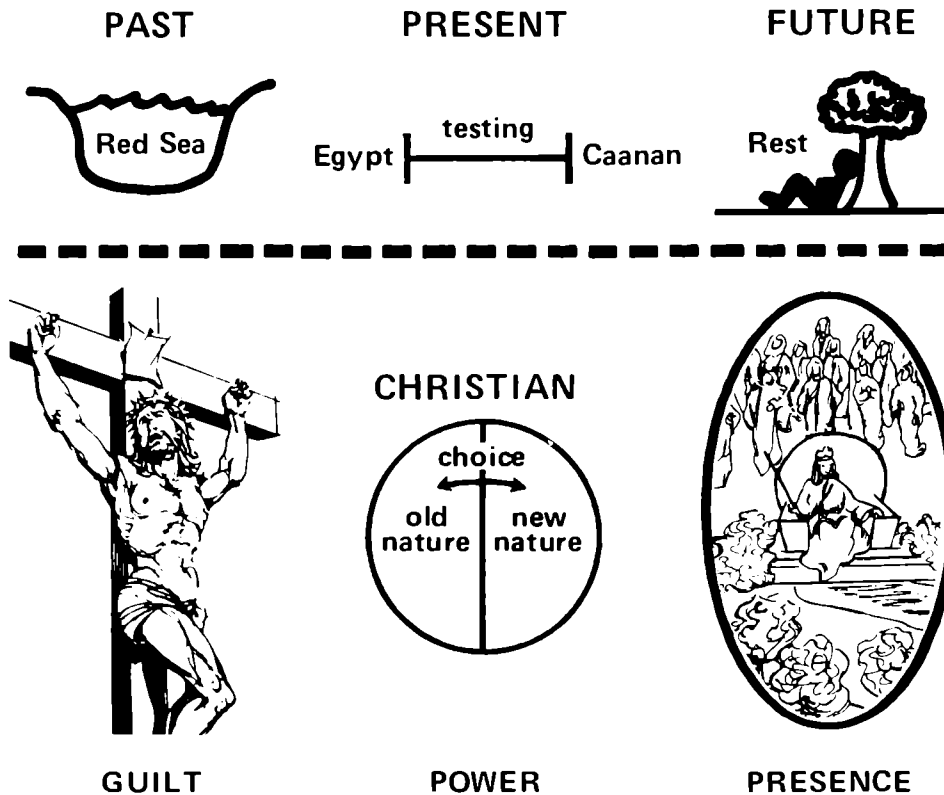
PATIENCE. The writer knew his readers would feel the weight of this particular Psalm. It was a favorite of the Jews. It was often read in their synagogues. This Psalm lent itself to a comparison of the faithfulness of the two leaders, Moses and Jesus on the one hand, and the people of God on the other. If Jesus and Moses had to be faithful, then it is obvious that their followers have to be faithful too. The Psalm recalls the many times

the children of Israel grumbled against God. The Lord Himself testified they had done this on no less than 10 occasions (Num. 14:22). As far as God was concerned, the whole 40 years in the wilderness was a time of testing revealing what the hearts of the Israelites were like (Deut. 8:2). But they flunked the test. In spite of all the miracles God did before their eyes, they refused to believe He would do what He said. This is why He became angry with them. The more He did for them, the more they rebelled against Him. Thus He became angry with that generation, keeping them in the wilderness until all the men of war (except Joshua and Caleb) died. Only then would He allow the next generation to enter the land—which He referred to as His “rest” (Deut. 12:9). It is clear that God has a limit to His patience, even when bearing with His own.



ANGER. The point to note is that God was angry with His own people. That first generation of Israelites was His own nation. These were the ones in whose midst He chose to dwell. They were “saved” the night of the passover when He brought them forth from Egypt and made them pass through the Red Sea. He then brought them before Himself at Sinai and entered into a covenant with them. They were His own. Yet they proved to be the kind who cared nothing about Him or His ways. They finally rebelled so much, there was nothing to do but disbar them from the blessing which was to have been theirs. If the Jewish Christians reading this letter could see themselves in the same position as their forefathers, they might have second thoughts about forsaking Jesus and returning to Judaism, especially now that they know He is superior to Moses. For the moment, they can act on God’s promises and trust Christ to the end. But if they chose to ignore God’s offer of a rich reward at the end of a faithful life, they will find that God does not simply overlook indifference. They will reap what they sow. They will find that God can be as rough on them as He was on the Israelites in the desert. Being saved does not set aside the law of the harvest.

THE 3 TENSES OF OUR SALVATION AS SEEN IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY



Israel's 3 stages: (1) her deliverance from Egypt, (2) her 40 years of testing in the wilderness, (3) and her entrance into the promised land picture the 3 stages of our salvation. The Passover and Exodus from Egypt picture the **past tense**, i. e., our once-for-all deliverance from the **GUILT** of sin. Her wilderness testings picture the **present tense**, i. e., our life on earth during which we experience the **POWER** of sin as we struggle between our two natures. Finally her entrance into the promised land pictures the **future tense**, i. e., when we leave this life and are delivered from the **PRESENCE** of sin. In that day, we will enter into our "rest." Observe that it is only the **NEW MAN** who enters the rest. The old man drops off with the flesh, as pictured by the generation of Israelites who died in the wilderness. The **QUALITY** of our rest depends on our readiness to trust the promises of the Lord and invest our lives in them.

There will be serious consequences for those Christians who trifle with God's call on their lives. Those who spurn His command to witness, for example, or those who fail to use their time and talents for Jesus. . . putting

their families and pleasures ahead of Him—will find it can be a “terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31). God does become angry with His own. The experience of the Israelites in the desert is a sample of it. It’s hard to face, but Christians who refuse to act on God’s promises will “suffer loss” (1 Cor. 3:15).

THE SECOND WARNING—vss. 12-19

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12. Therefore, my brothers, take care that none of you finds himself with a heart so wickedly unbelieving that he turns his back on the living God. 13. Sin has power to blind and harden our hearts toward God. So strengthen each other against this sin of unbelief by discussing these things every day, while it can still be called “today.”



TAKE CARE. The writer now makes a direct application of David’s warning to his readers. Beware, he says, lest you show the same distrust that your fathers showed. If you do, you’ll lose the blessings you might have had, just as they lost them. His logic is easy to follow: if unbelief prevented that first generation of Jews from entering God’s rest, it can also prevent the Hebrew Christians of the writer’s day from God’s blessing as well. And if Christ is greater than Moses, as he has already shown, then obviously they would incur a **greater loss** by turning away from Jesus. We need to see that it would be easy for the Hebrew Christians to feel there was nothing wrong in returning to Judaism. After all, it was established by God. To their minds it was merely one of two ways to obey the Lord. They certainly didn’t think of it as apostasy, i.e., turning their backs on God. But to the writer it was precisely that. He saw no difference between their turning back to Judaism, and the ancient Israelites turning (in their hearts) back to Egypt (Acts 7:39). As far as the author is concerned, ANY return to Judaism would be an act of unbelief toward God. For people who didn’t know any better, Judaism

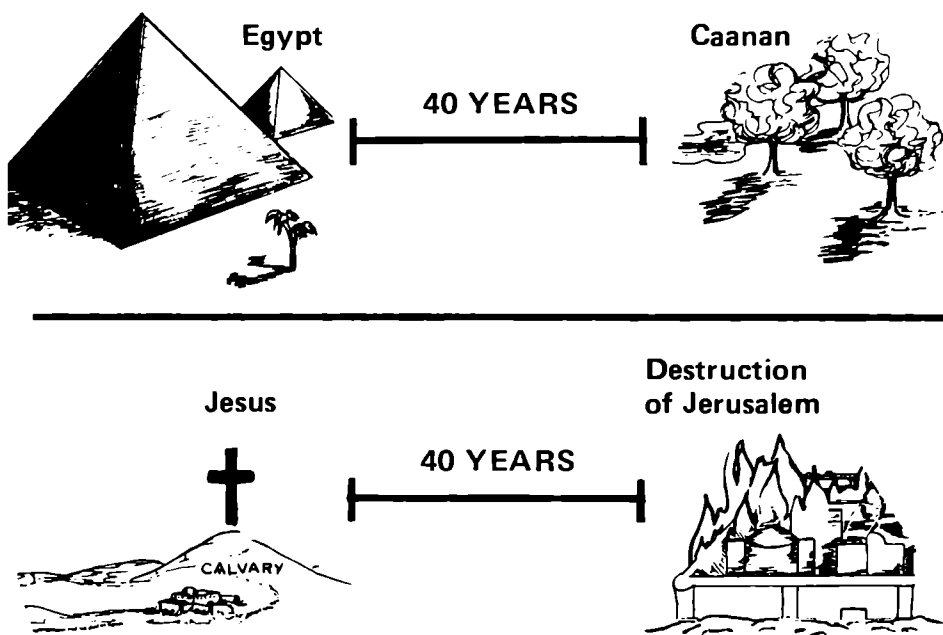
would be a valid step toward God. But for those who were enlightened and had received the revelation of God in Christ, it would be a step backwards. No, it would be worse than that. It would be turning against God and sinning against the light they had. That's why the author is so urgent in sounding these warnings.



SIN. Keep in mind as we proceed through Hebrews, that the word "SIN" does not refer to the **conduct** of believers, but their confidence in the **Word of God**. The SIN of Hebrews is an evil heart of unbelief. If you don't believe God will do what He says, that is SIN in the eyes of our writer. That was the great sin of ancient Israel. She turned from following the true God to worshipping idols made of wood and stone which could neither hear nor speak. They were dead. Yet Israel had heard the true God speak and on numerous occasions, had seen what He could do. She **KNEW** He was alive! Even so she didn't **believe** He would do as He said and she refused to enter the promised land. Through this unbelief she turned from the living God to go back to dead idols. In effect our writer is saying to his readers, "You'll be doing the same thing if you forsake Jesus and go back to Judaism. You don't want to trade the living God for a dead religion, do you? That's the same evil heart of unbelief your forefathers had!" But they were **BLIND** to this danger. Why? Sin is a great deceiver. When a person gets his eyes on his troubles rather than on God, Satan can make him rationalize away the godly path and choose the evil way. The devil helps to make the evil seem right in his own mind. Thus Judaism looked good to the suffering Hebrew Christians. Satan made it seem like a proper step to secure relief. But it was just a trap. Since he wanted to turn their hearts from God, how better than by using religion? It's ingenious to trick religious people with religion. They wouldn't be turning from religion, but from the true God. There was no way for Judaism to satisfy them, **once they had tasted** the reality of Christ. But they don't see that. The sin of unbelief has shut their eyes to it. Thus they are ready to trade the eter-

nal blessings reserved for the faithful for any temporary relief they might find in Judaism. But that's the way sin works—always. The apostasy of the end time will be religious in character, with Christians forsaking true Christianity for an ecumenical church devoid of spiritual life.

ANOTHER PARALLEL



There is a parallel to be observed between the 40 years wandering by the Israelites and the approximate 40 year interval between Jesus' ministry and the destruction of Jerusalem. Both generations of Jews had rejected the Word of the Lord and both were ripe for judgment. Undoubtedly the writer is thinking of Jesus' words foretelling the destruction of the temple (Luke 21:20-24). Later he will say that the whole system of Judaism is about to "vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). Inasmuch as Judaism is about to be set aside, it would be utter folly for the Hebrew Christians to turn from Jesus in order to seek relief in a system as good as dead. Viewed in this fashion they do seem about to make the same mistake as did their ancestors in the wilderness. No wonder he pleads with them, "Don't go back to Judaism!"



TODAY. To keep the Hebrew Christians from such a course, our writer offers some fabulous advice. He exhorts them to strengthen each other daily with words of encouragement. He wants them to get to-

gether and tell each other to hang on even though the going is rough. Talking about the blessings reserved for us in Christ is powerful medicine for unbelief. The writer apparently knew that Satan has an easy time with believers when he can get them alone. Isolation is the enemy of godliness. Individual Christians who stew over their problems alone are easy prey for the devil. If he can get them when they are going over their problems in their minds, all by themselves (or constantly telling them to another person), he can pick them off every time. It's an unhealthy atmosphere. But let Christians get together often to share blessings and discuss what they have in the Lord, and they'll be strengthened every time. This is why the writer urges them to keep in fellowship and talk up the things of Christ. Obviously aware that he was living in momentous times, the author places great stress on the word. . . "today." He apparently sensed the city of Jerusalem would soon be destroyed. So he says, "If you're going to act on God's promises, you'd better do it now!" By that he means, "Serve the Lord while you can. Tomorrow may never come." For each man, "today." is his lifetime. Who has any assurance of tomorrow? Fortunately, it is still "today." It's not too late to give God the trust and obedience He deserves.

14. We are partners with Christ, due to share in all that He has for us, if we keep the confidence we had in Him at the first—all the way to the end. 15. That, you see, is the meaning behind the Holy Spirit's words when He asks you to "listen to the voice of God as He speaks to you today:

"Do not harden your hearts against Me as they did when they rebelled against Me and provoked Me."



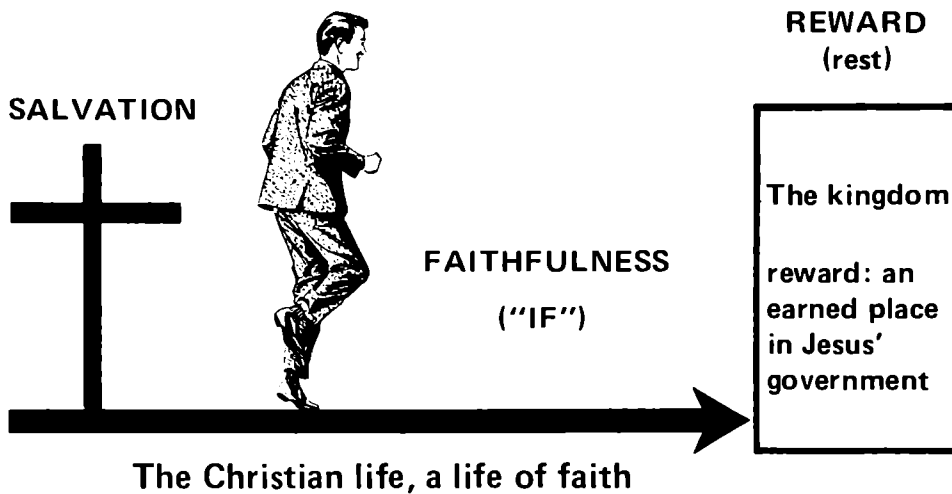
CONFIDENCE. Notice how we have come back to the "if" of verse six? We are partners with Christ, says our writer, if we keep our confidence in Christ all the way to the end. Here the writer uses a different Gk. word for "confidence," one which has the idea of

maintaining our complete trust in Christ. So what he is saying is, we are going to share with Christ—if we keep faith with Him. In Hebrews, the idea of sharing with Christ or partaking with Him, is not the same as Paul's idea of being IN CHRIST. To Paul, a partaker was one who was joined to Jesus in the Spirit, something which occurs at the **beginning** of one's Christian life. To our writer, partaking with Him is something that occurs at the **END** of this life, i.e., sharing with Him in His Kingdom. He is thinking of the privileges and blessings believers will enjoy in the **future**—if they keep their confidence in Christ and are faithful to Him. Therefore Paul is referring to **salvation**, when he speaks of partaking OF Christ, and our writer is referring to **rewards** when he speaks of partaking WITH Christ. When the Hebrew Christians first received the gospel they were thrilled with Jesus. They acknowledged Him as Messiah and went all out in living for Him. But with a delay in His return and mounting persecutions, their enthusiasm cooled. Then they began to look toward Judaism for relief from their afflictions. They were in danger of throwing away their confidence in Christ. The writer warns that they must maintain their confidence in Him—firm to the end—if they expect to partake of His blessings in the kingdom.



MEANING. Our writer is again thinking of the Israelites in the wilderness as he brings forth the real meaning of David's words in the 95th Psalm. He is saying it was **not enough** for the Israelites to escape Egypt through the Red Sea (a picture of salvation). They had to continue to trust in God's promises and act on them, if they wanted to enjoy the promised land (which pictured the reward of faithfulness). As we study Hebrews we must distinguish between **SALVATION** and **REWARDS**. They are separate matters. One comes at the **beginning** of the Christian life, the other at the **end**. If we fail to observe this distinction we will have our writer teaching salvation by works. Salvation is only the beginning of a new life which must be lived by faith.

THE FAITH OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS



See that believer? He's saved now, the cross is behind him. But what is ahead of him? A life of faith. And at the END of that life, a rich reward—IF he remains faithful and puts Jesus first in all things (Matt. 6:33). The degree to which a believer makes Christ his Lord and faithfully serves Him with good works, to that SAME DEGREE will he occupy a useful place in Jesus' administration. Perhaps the sweetest words any Christian will hear are. . . 'Well done, thou good and FAITHFUL servant. . . !' (Matt. 25:21, 23). But no one will hear these words until the END of a faithful life. When the writer speaks of faith and obedience and entering into God's rest, he is NOT speaking of the faith to be saved, but that faithfulness which earns a joyous reward at the end of one's life.

There are many things for which we must trust the Lord for as **Christians**, whether our daily bread, health, or His blessing on the job. At the END of this faith-life, a glorious reward awaits those who keep their confidence in God's Word and act on His promises. The Israelites didn't do this. They lost confidence in His Word and refused to enter the promised land (Num. 14). Even though they died in the desert they did NOT lose their status as His people. That's the big truth here: **God's**

own people can be unbelievers. The idea of believing does not always pertain to salvation. The fact that the Israelites DIED is NOT the lesson. The tragedy is that they lost what they might have had, had they remained faithful. The promised land was to be the REWARD of their faithfulness, not their salvation. If the Jewish readers get the message, they'll see that they are close to losing the reward they might have with Christ, because they are losing confidence in His Word and looking to Judaism for relief. The story of the 40 years in the desert is a gigantic visual aid. It shows how expensive it can be when God's people refuse to take Him at His Word and look elsewhere for security and blessing.

"Was it really God's own people who refused to believe Him?"

16. Now just who was it that heard God's voice in the desert and turned right around and provoked Him? Was it not all those whom Moses led out of Egypt? 17. And with whom was God angry during those forty years? Was it not those who preferred their own way over His way, even though they knew what He expected of them, whose corpses He left scattered in the wilderness? 18. And when He vowed in His anger—"they shall never enter into My rest"—to whom was He referring? Very clearly it was those who refused to believe His promises.



WHO? Our writer insists that it was God's own people who disbelieved Him. To establish this point he asks three questions: (1) just who was it that rebelled against God and provoked Him in the desert? It was NOT the heathen, but His very own people; those whom He delivered from Egypt and brought to Himself at Sinai. (2) Just who rebelled against Him for 40 long years? It was people who **knew better**, people who had both heard His voice and seen His works. (3) And who made Him so angry that He left their bodies to rot in

the wilderness? It was a people who refused to believe Him even after they had entered into a covenant with Him to obey Him (Exodus 19:8). God had given His Word to them. They had pledged their word to Him. It was a deal, but they broke it. The writer wants his readers to see the parallel between themselves and their forefathers in the desert. They were now God's people through faith in Christ. They had received the Spirit and were delivered from their old way of life. And they had been taught that great things awaited them in Christ. So he puts it to them: do you want to be like your ancestors and rebell against God? That's what you'll be doing if you turn from trusting Jesus and put your confidence in Judaism. If you make that decision, you'll lose all that God has promised you in the day when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom on earth. As God left the Israelites to die in the desert, so will He let Christians wander aimlessly in the desert of this life, forfeiting their great reward—if they refuse to be faithful to Him. They will still be His children. They will enter the kingdom, but they will lose their right to reign for that is based on faithfulness (Matt. 25:21, 23).

19. So what do we conclude? They were excluded from the blessedness of His rest because of their unbelief.

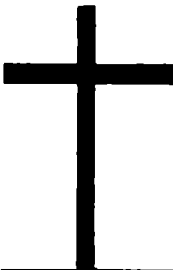



CONCLUDE. The writer says that **unbelief** kept God's own people from the reward (rest) that might have been theirs had they acted in faith and gone in and possessed the land. The startling truth which emerges from this is—**God's own people can be guilty of unbelief.** It's amazing how Chrisitans can trust God for salvation, yet have so little faith beyond that. Salvation is just the beginning of a life of faith. Must we not trust Him for everything from our daily bread to the healing of our bodies? Don't we have to look to Him for protection from evil as well as His blessing on all we do in His name? It takes faith to serve an unseen Savior. God offers many

things to His people which **COULD BE** theirs—if they **really believed Him**. Was it not to **His own** that Jesus said, if you had the faith of a grain of mustard seed you could move mountains (Matt. 17:20)? Most believers live far below their privileges in Christ simply because they don't believe God means what He says. The Israelites didn't believe, nether do many of us today. God makes it clear that Christians will have **NO TREASURE** in heaven, unless they lay it up for themselves (Matt. 6:20). But how many believe that? Most seem to think that if

HOW PAUL SEES THE SAME TRUTH


SALVATION
(starting gun)






PRIZE
(Phil. 3:14)

reward



FAITHFULNESS- -
- - to the end



The race of the Christian life (1 Cor. 9:24)

The apostle pictures the Christian life as a race. To be in the race one must have Christ. Non-Christians are not in this race. Once a person is saved he can compete for the **PRIZE**. To **WIN** that prize (reward), he must strive all the way to the end of the race. Any racer knows you can't let up and win. Ah, but does losing the race make one any less a Christian? No, He is still saved, but he forefeits what he might have otherwise won. Against whom does the Christian compete? Himself. He is judged on the basis of what he has done, compared with what he could have done. His reward is based on how well he exploits his own potential. Obviously, then, the casual Christian cannot hope to receive the same prize (reward) as one who devotes himself to serving the Lord. While a true Christian need never fear losing his salvation, he can lose his reward. That is more tragic than losing anything in this life, whether a wife, child or one's eyes. Every Christian should work as hard as he can to win this race. Paul was obsessed with winning it (Phil. 3:13).

they are saved that's all that is necessary. But God says otherwise, and to think that the "law of the harvest" will not stand is to be guilty of **unbelief**. When God says those who serve Him faithfully will reap a reward, and those who do not will **LOSE** their reward, Christians had better take Him seriously. There is no respect of persons with God. He will deal with unfaithful Christians as severely as He dealt with those Israelites in the desert.



EXCLUDED. We're so used to thinking of Christians as having "ALL THINGS" in Christ, our minds simply refuse to think they could be excluded from anything. Yet that is precisely the truth pictured by the Israelites in the desert. Because of their unbelief they were **DIS-INHERITED**. There is no difference between them and Christians today. Those who refuse to trust God to do as He says, failing to run the race and compete for the prize, will find they have **LOST** what they could have had. Because a man is a Christian is no guarantee that he will reign with Christ. That is reserved for those willing to suffer for His sake (2 Tim. 2:12, 13). Now every believer will be **IN** the kingdom, but being **IN** it and **RULING** are two different things. Only those qualified to rule will rule. This life is the qualifying period. Only here do we learn to rule ourselves so that we can rule others. It is here that we learn to be faithful in little things (such as money), so we can be trusted with greater things in the kingdom. If we believe God and serve Him now, we will rule with Him. If we don't, we **FORFEIT** any privilege we might have otherwise enjoyed (1 Cor. 3:15). Nowhere does our writer teach salvation by works. He does teach that **REWARDS** can be **LOST** and that is the warning he is sounding in these chapters. While believers can be excluded from blessing (rewards) which could have been theirs—had they been faithful to the end—they will not be excluded from the kingdom. This does not mean that our writer has no words for any unsaved people mingled with believers. Indeed he has. He will warn them later on in 6:4-6.

4 1. Now that promise of entering into God's rest still holds good. In fact, the opportunity is open to all of us right now. Yet there's always a chance that some of us could miss it, and that should put the fear of God into us. The possibility that any of us could be judged as failures should compel us to make sure that doesn't happen.



HOLDS GOOD. The last word in Ch. 3 was "unbelief." That brought us face to face with the idea that believers can be guilty of unbelief. If unbelief could keep the Israelites out of the promised land (a type of God's rest, because they had to earn it), it can also keep Christians from inheriting God's promised rewards (God's true rest). Inasmuch as our writer says that the promise of God's rest still holds good, it obviously wasn't fulfilled or exhausted by those Israelites who finally entered the land. Being in the land was NOT the "rest," for 400 years later David is still offering that rest to people who are already in the land. Beyond that, our writer says the promise is still open. So far in the exposition we've established that God's rest has to do with REWARDS. Rewards are EARNED. Therefore it is possible for a Christian to throw away the reward (rest) awaiting him through unbelief and disobedience. But this isn't new. We've heard the same thing from the apostle Paul. With blunt words he said every Christian is going to be judged for his works. And that each believer will be rewarded or suffer loss on the basis of what he does with his one opportunity of this life on earth (2 Cor. 5:10, 1 Cor. 3:15). But since our writer is addressing Jewish Christians and not Gentiles, he uses the story of the Israelites in the wilderness to teach the same truth. His Jewish readers would see the parallel between themselves and their ancestors and realize they were in danger of displaying similar unbelief in God's promises. What was it they were to believe? That God means what He says and will do exactly as He says He will do. Our writer is definitely thinking of the day of judgment and

what it is going to cost those Christians who refuse to believe God's promises or simply neglect them.



COMPEL. The fact that any of us could fail to act on God's promises through unbelief, says our writer, should scare us to death. But you might reply, "It really doesn't scare me." The point is, it should. It doesn't scare a blind man to be near the edge of a cliff, but that doesn't mean he isn't in danger. He is, and so is the person who closes his eyes to the fact that this life is one in which we must believe God or suffer the consequences. The hard truth is that few of us come close to trusting God for all He has in store for us, and because of it, we're going to **suffer loss**. We're not used to thinking of Christians as losing anything. We're so accustomed to thinking of having everything in Christ, that we don't consider the **ETERNAL LOSS** we could suffer through unbelief. But we should. It ought to scare us. We needn't dread that word, "fear." It is a great motivator. The apostle Paul admitted it was fear that moved him to action (2 Cor. 5:11a). The fear of the Lord, you see, "is the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. 111:10). There's a genuine connection between fear and faith. The man who truly believes God will do as He says (especially concerning the judgment), will fear to disobey Him. It is when people have no fear of God that they live as they please. As far as God is concerned, disobedience is unbelief. If we really believe Him, we'll obey Him. It's going to be rough for some Christians to see what could have been theirs, taken from them, and given to those who believed God and acted on His promises. So we learn again, that because a person has the faith to be saved, it does not mean he has the faith to earn the **REST** (reward) God has for him. A sad day is coming for many, it would seem (1 John 2:28).



REST. Each time we come to the word "rest," we learn a little more about it. Is this rest something God **GIVES** to His people, or is it His **OWN** rest?

God's rest consists of working with His creation, enjoying the fruit of His labors. Are not we also refreshed when we work with a hobby or in the yard?



In the 95th Psalm David quotes God as saying, "They shall never enter MY rest!" Thus it is God's OWN rest, something which He himself enjoys. Further in the chapter we'll learn that it is a rest which began after He had finished His creation. God spent 6 days setting up the earthly program with man at the center of it. Then what did He do? Take a vacation? No. He went right to work on a plan for testing people and bringing sons to maturity. And He enjoys it. God's rest consists of working with His creation, enjoying the fruit of His labors. Is

that so different from our own experience? Are not we also refreshed when we work with a hobby or in the yard? Haven't we returned home from a vacation exhausted, glad to get back to our homes and jobs so we could "rest up?" God's rest includes such projects as building His church, the millennial kingdom, the final destruction of Satan, and the eternal programs which come after that. The chief thing to see is that God's rest is NOT a vacation from work, but WORKING with His creation. Work can be refreshing—if you like it. And God likes it! He's an industrious Person. Consequently those who enter His rest, find themselves involved with a BUSY Person. This is why His rest is reserved for those who mean business for Jesus and like working with Him. The life we'll have in the eternal future will be a busy one. A job will be assigned to us on the basis of our faithfulness in this life. **That job will be our rest.**

2. Has not the good news of what awaits the faithful been preached to us as well as to those Israelites? It has indeed. However, it didn't do them any good because they didn't believe it. They refused to put any faith in what they heard.



TO US. The story of the failure of their fathers in the desert was an emotional thing with the readers of this letter. Our writer will use those emotions to drive home his warning against turning their backs on Jesus. It's true that the promise made to the Israelites in the wilderness had to do with a LAND, whereas the promise made to the readers had to do with an eternal REST (reward)—but the principle is the same: believe God and enjoy His reward—disbelieve Him and suffer. The Exodus generation heard the voice of God in the wilderness and saw His mighty works of power. It was obvious He could carry out any promise He made. Yet when the announcement (good news) concerning the promised land came through Moses, they didn't believe it. They refused to go into the land. The Hebrew Christians receiving this letter had also heard the good news of what

God wanted to do for them through Christ. They received spiritual promises from the Lord. It was now a question of whether or not they would believe the promises. Thus they were in the SAME position as their forefathers. They could believe Jesus and act on His promises, or they could disbelieve Him and go back to Judaism. Don't be like your forefathers, pleads the writer. Don't make the mistake they made. Trust Jesus to reward your faithfulness. Invest your lives in Him. Now this plea might not be so moving as far as we're concerned. We don't have an emotional link with those Israelites who died in the desert. But the readers did and this was a powerful way for the writer to drive home his warning.

"What proof is there that the invitation to God's rest is still open?"

3. On the other hand, those of us who do believe His promises will enter into His rest. This is why God said,

**"In My anger I vowed,
They shall never enter My rest!"**

Now God didn't say that because His rest wasn't available. It has been available ever since He created the world. 4. This is quite clear from what is said in another place: "God rested on the seventh day from all His labors." 5. Yet here in this passage of the Psalm, which was written years later, we find Him saying: "They shall never enter into My rest!" Consequently it had to be for another reason that the Israelites were excluded.



AVAILABLE. Our writer now means to prove what he said in the opening verse of this chapter, that God's rest is still open to us. In the process of doing so, it will become clear that God's promised rest was NOT merely the land of Palestine. Do we know that for sure? 400 years after the Israelites went in and took

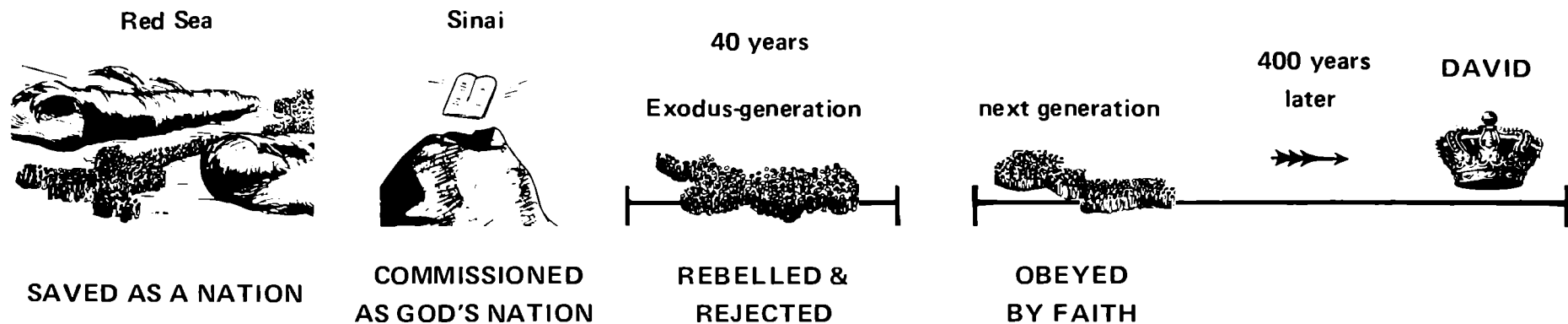
the land, David told them that God's rest still awaited them. From this we learn that simply **being in the land** was not the fulfillment of God's idea of REST. Carried over to us, that principle says that merely being in heaven is NOT the fulfillment of God's rest. To show that God's rest is **spiritual** rather than **physical**, our writer compares the words of David in Psa. 95 with those of Gen. 2:2. The Genesis account says that God began His rest AFTER He had finished His **physical** work, the six days of creation. On the 7th day God began a rest that hasn't ended or been interrupted. Therefore, God is STILL resting and eager to share His rest with all who will enter it by faith and obedience. Going in and taking the promised land (in the power of God) is a picture or type of the spiritual rest awaiting those who believe the Lord and want to work with Him. For proof that God's rest is a working rest, we have Jesus' own words. . . "My Father is working and I am working with Him" (John 5:17). If God is resting and Jesus is working with Him, then God's rest is a WORKING REST. Those who enter into God's rest today, join with Him in the work He is doing today. Those who BUSY themselves for Jesus now, will have the best jobs in the kingdom.

6. Thus the promise of God's rest is still open and we know some are going to enter it. The fact that those who first received the invitation refused to believe it and wouldn't act on it, didn't lead God to cancel His promise. 7. We are certain of that for we find God setting another day which He calls "today." Years later God gave the same invitation to His people when He spoke through David in the Scripture we quoted earlier:

"Listen to the voice of God as He speaks to you today. Do not harden your hearts against Me!"

8. Obviously then, the land of Palestine was not God's true rest. If it were, then God would not be

THE DRAMATIC LESSON IN THE DESERT



Behold the Exodus-generation delivered out of Egypt. Suffering under Pharaoh, saved by the passover of the death angel, chosen as God's own nation at Sinai, these people should have gone into the land. It was promised to them. But when it came time to ACT on God's promise, they refused. Because of this disbelief and disobedience, God took away what was theirs by promise and gave it to the next generation. God's allowing of His own people to suffer the consequences of their own folly, is a visual

drama of what to expect at the judgment seat of Christ. Those who believe God and mean business in committing themselves to His work will enter His rest and enjoy a rich reward. Those who choose to live for themselves instead, will find their promised reward taken from them and given to those who believed Him and served Him by faith. Many Christians are going to be disappointed at this judgment.

speaking of another “today” so many years after Joshua led the people into that land.



TODAY. The writer presses the 95th Psalm still further. The fact that David offers the **same rest** to Israelites 400 years after they took possession of the land, is proof that God’s invitation is still open and is spiritual rather than physical. It also shows that God is **determined** to have people share His rest with Him. The invitation is therefore being held open until He has all those who want to trust Him and work with Him. God’s dealing with the Israelites in the desert is a gigantic visual aid. His exclusion of the entire Exodus-generation, teaches us that He doesn’t hesitate to **PENALIZE** His own people. He deals severely with those who trifle with His opportunities, as the apostle Paul has taught us so vividly. The entrance of the next generation into the land teaches us another lesson: God **TAKES AWAY** promised rewards from those who disbelieve His promises and gives them to those who will believe them and act upon them. Jesus taught this same truth to His disciples (Lk. 19:26). Only the genius of God would use an entire nation to dramatize such truths. It is clear then, if **MANY** miss God’s “rest” through unbelief, it remains that **SOME** are going to enter it. The invitation which God gave the Exodus-generation was not a one time deal. It is open-ended and valid “today.” That invitation will remain open until Jesus finishes the building of His church and returns to reign on earth in Person.



OBVIOUSLY. It is obvious now that the earthly occupation of the land of Palestine is **NOT** God’s **TRUE REST**. Under Joshua, the next generation went in and possessed the land. The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hands and they were given **REST** “from all their enemies round about” (Josh. 23:1). The Israelites had already been enjoying **THAT REST** for generations when David spoke to them in the 95th Psalm. Therefore the “rest” of which David was speaking was something very different from the rest the Israelites

enjoyed under Joshua. It was obviously spiritual rather than temporal, for they already had the temporal rest. Since God's true rest is spiritual, the writer is convinced it is STILL OPEN to His people. Thus the word "today," really means TODAY. The opportunity to enter God's rest is still open and the Lord is bringing TODAY messages to His people right now. Yet how many of God's people fail to heed His "today" messages? How many put off doing what they know God expects of them, thinking tomorrow is another day. This life is merely the front porch of eternity. "Today" is the key that opens the door to riches and success in the life to come.

HEBREWS: THE BOOK OF WARNING

ROMANS

HEBREWS

REVELATION



SALVATION

WARNING

JUDGMENT

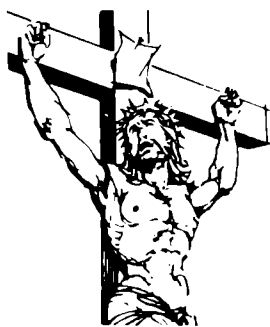
It is fascinating to note the place Hebrews occupies in the New Testament. It stands between the salvation set forth in Romans and the terrible judgment we see in the Revelation. Our Lord is the Savior of Romans and the Judge of the Revelation. But He is also the High Priest of Hebrews. He does His best to keep His people from suffering the judgment He must deal out to those who refuse to work with Him. Those who fail to heed the warnings of this book will be sorry when they face Him at the judgment. Any loss they suffer because of their indifferences will be permanent. What folly to throw away the one opportunity of life on earth to qualify for a terrific job with Jesus in the eternal kingdom.

Those who trifle with their opportunities will find that door locked to them. They will hear the saddest words ever spoken, "You are too late." "Today" is all anyone has. God doesn't hesitate to take away what could have been theirs had they heeded His Word while it was still "today" for them.

9. Therefore, we see that a sabbath rest still awaits God's people. 10. And anyone who enters into God's rest, rests from his own works as God did from His.

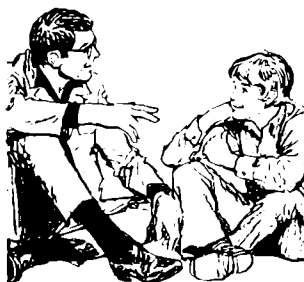
THREE PHASES OF THE CHRISTIAN'S REST

PAST



SALVATION

PRESENT



SERVING
THE LORD

FUTURE



REIGNING
WITH HIM

While God's rest, which began after the 6 days of creation, is ETERNAL and everlasting, it breaks up into three phases, which correspond to the believer's three tenses of salvation—past, present and future. Once we understand the three phases, then it is possible to identify which phase the writer has in mind in any given passage, and avoid confusion. (1) PAST. At salvation the believer ceases all effort to justify himself and rests wholly on the Lord's redemptive work for him. This is phase one and is NOT the phase our writer has in mind primarily. (2) PRESENT. Since God's rest is a **working rest**, those who enter that rest, also enter into His work. Phase two, then, has to do with helping the Lord build His church. (3) FUTURE. At death the Christian ceases from all of his godly works on earth and enters phase three of God's rest. Not only will he reign with Christ (his exact position based on his faithfulness) but he will enjoy all the fruits of his labors during phase two of God's rest. Note that reigning is also work.



SABBATH. That God's rest is still open to His people is now beyond question. Our writer speaks of it again, but this time he states the truth in a remarkable way. He says a **sabbath rest** awaits God's people. His use of the word "sabbath rest" is arresting. Throughout the letter he has been using "katapausis," which is the regular Gk. word for rest. But here he changes it to "sabbatismos," which means **sabbath rest**. Our writer is probably coining a new word, for this is the only place in the N. T. where this word is used. This then is his own word for the rest which God began in Gen. 2:2; that rest which He began after He had finished the physical creation and set up the human program. By using this word, our writer lets his Jewish readers know that God's rest is totally different and completely separate from any kind of human rest. In no way is it connected with the rest which God gave Israel under Joshua. It is a rest entered by obedience. Note that this sabbath rest is **FUTURE**. It is a rest entered after our work on earth is done, after our trials and labors are over. When God completed His work of creation He rested. When we've completed our work for Christ, we'll rest too. But the rest we enter is the **FINAL** phase of God's rest. See now why Christian service is so vital? If a believer fails to invest His life in Christ, there won't be anything for Him to enjoy when he gets to heaven. This future rest consists solely of enjoying the fruit of our work for Christ. If we have no works, then what is there to enjoy?



RESTS. Our writer amplifies this truth in vs. 10, stating specifically that we rest from our **OWN** works. But since it is **God's rest**, it has to be a rest from doing the work of God. The hard truth is: no works, no future rest. Now we know why Paul considered death to be the "last enemy" of the Christian (1 Cor. 15:26). If death ushered us into an eternal bliss where all Christians were equal, regardless of how they served the Lord, then death would be the believer's **LAST FRIEND**. That's a view many hold, but it simply is not the case. Death is the **last enemy** of the Christian because

it brings to an end all opportunity to: (1) change into the likeness of Christ, (2) lay up treasure in heaven (earn rewards). Once we die, we will no longer serve the Lord **by faith**. We will walk by sight then. NOW ("today") is the time to believe God's promises and invest in Him. When we leave this life it will be too late.

heb 4

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Death is the **last enemy** of the Christian because it brings an end to all opportunity to change into the likeness of Christ, and to lay up treasure in heaven.

There are no make-up classes in Christianity—no second chances (Heb. 9:27). It is my opinion that the judgment of the believer occurs at death. This seems necessary since we enter God’s rest, and that rest has to do with our future jobs. We can hardly be assigned that job until our works on earth have been evaluated. However, until death strikes our bodies we can work for Jesus as much as we want to. We can get as rich (spiritual treasure) in Christ as we desire. The old saying is true, “Only one life, ‘twill soon be past—only what’s done for Christ, will last!” It’s a hard fact, but if a man has no works for Christ, he’ll have no fruit to enjoy in heaven. He’ll have no works from which to rest, as God rested from His works.

“How will the writer sum up this great warning?”

11. So let us work as hard as we can to enter that rest, determined that not a single one of us should follow the example of those Israelites and fail to enter in because of disobedience.



WORK. In pressing home the lesson drawn from the failure of the Israelites in the desert, the writer urges his readers to work as hard as they can to enter God’s rest. In view of all the glory available to God’s people through faith, he admonishes them to avoid the disaster of unbelief and disobedience. Because God’s rest is future, coming after we die, it is easy to bypass His offers and get involved in the things of this world. For many, making a living, cancer in the body, or losing a loved one, is more real than anything God has to say. It is tragic for Christians not to take God at His Word and believe He means exactly what He says. Those who trifle with His promises, living for themselves instead of investing their lives with Him, will be horrified when they see what their disobedience has cost them when they stand before Him at the judgment. It may sound like a contradiction to say that we enter God’s rest by hard work, but it is not. When we understand that God’s

rest is a **working rest** (He's a hard worker Himself), then it is clear that it can only be shared by hard workers. Some people work hard in their yards as a means of rest from their regular labors. So even to us, "rest" often means work. God watches His people carefully. Everything they do in His name brings a reward, right down to giving a cup of cold water (Matt. 10:42). The harder we work for Jesus in this life, the greater our reward (treasure in heaven). The greater our treasure, the more we will be able to enjoy the fruit of our labors, even as God does His. Those who chose to labor for "that which perishes," will have no fruit to enjoy in heaven (John 6:27). See—the law of the harvest also applies to those who are born-again. There is no way to reap unless first we sow.

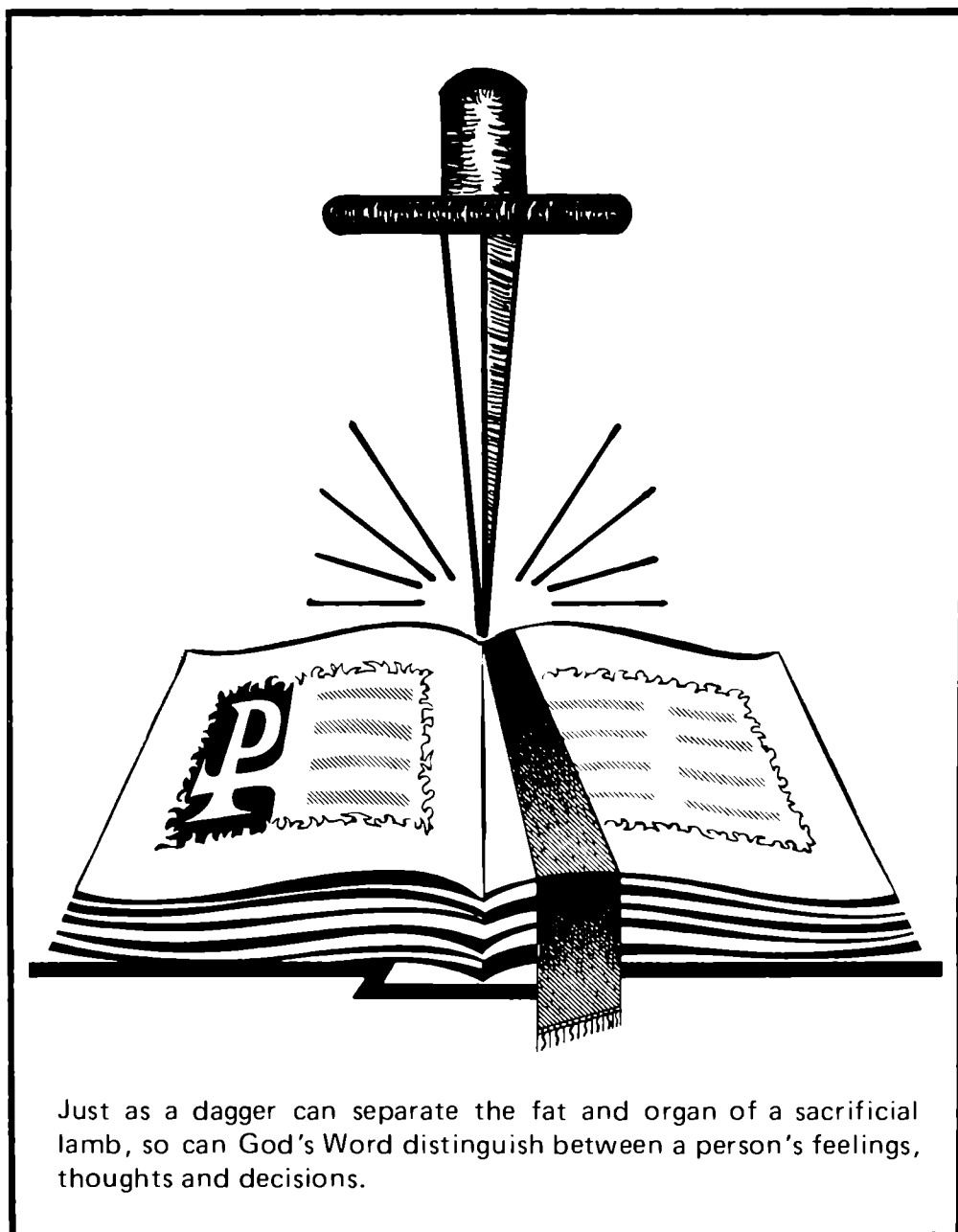
"Then it is actually dangerous to trifle with the Word of God?"

12. For the Word of God that speaks to us is alive and energetic. It cuts more deeply than a finely honed dagger, dividing soul and spirit; whereas a knife cannot even divide between joints and marrow. Penetrating the depths of our innermost being, God's Word exposes our thoughts and judges the most intimate desires of our hearts. 13. There is no way to hide anything from God. Everything lies bare and naked before His all-searching eyes. And it is to Him that we must finally give an account of ourselves.



WORD. Most versions say God's Word penetrates like a two-edged sword, but a finely honed dagger fits the imagery better. The idea is probably taken from the knife of the priest as it is plunged into the sacrificial lamb to separate the inner parts. We are not getting a lesson in biology here, rather we are being introduced to the discriminating power of God's Word. Just as a dagger can separate the fat and organ meats of a carcass, so can God's Word distinguish between a person's feelings, thoughts and decisions. To the Jews, it was a

serious thing for God to speak. To them, His Word was not just a matter of sounds with words attached to them—it **was a power**. The prophet Isaiah heard God say that His Word would never return to Him void, but would accomplish everything He desired (Isa. 55:11). The very nature of God's Word, is such that it will do its job in the one who hears it, regardless of what he thinks of it. God's Word slices through all mental barriers to become lodged in a man's thought processes. There it resides, not as mere knowledge, but as energized truth. It will do a job inside him no matter how hard he tries to

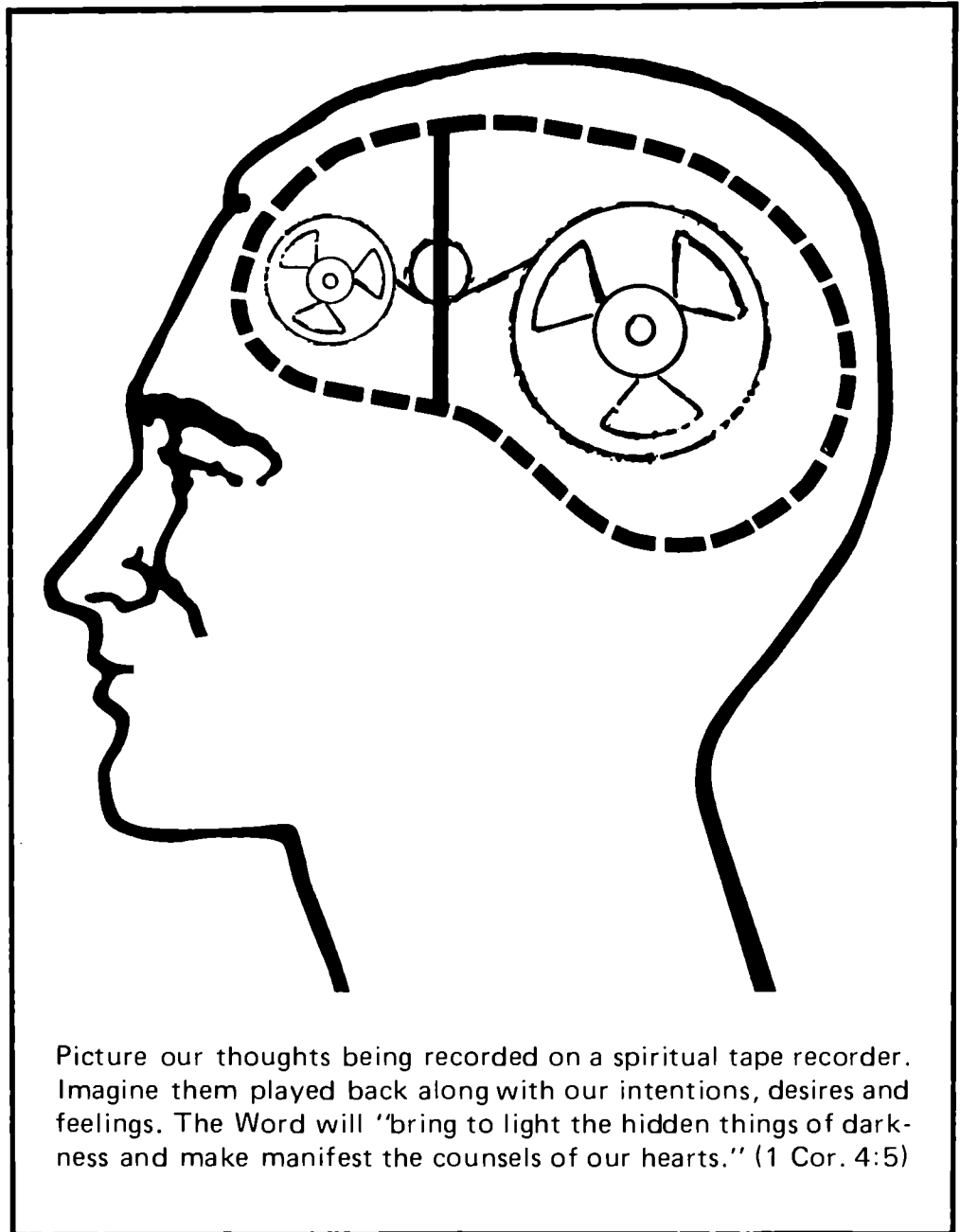


ignore it. Because this Word is living and does remarkable things in a man, the temptation is to think the reference is to Jesus. That is only partly true. The text is actually referring to the written or spoken Word, but not apart from the Spirit of the Lord. When Jesus says, "My words are spirit and they are life," He means His Spirit always accompanies His Word. Therefore the operation described here is performed by **both**, the Spirit of Truth and the Truth itself. The Holy Spirit watches the process taking place in one's mind when he hears the Word. (The devil does too, Matt. 13:19). This is why our writer says it is sharper than any dagger, doing what no dagger can do—dividing between a man's innate desires (his soul) and his decisions (his spirit).



EXPOSES. The Word of God is a **TERROR** to anyone who understands how it accomplishes God's will inside him. If a man ignores God's offer, the Word knows it—and also **why** he does it. God's Word can distinguish between the raw drives of the human organism (sex, hunger, survival), and the effects those have on his thoughts. It even is aware of the effect of his subconscious forces on his decisions. So when a man makes a decision about the things of God, whether to obey or not to obey, the Word knows what is behind the decision. Now this is an ability we don't have. Only God knows us that well (1 Cor. 13:12). We might be able to fool others with the image we project, but we can't fool God. In the last day, said Jesus, His Word will judge us (Jo. 12:48). That Word will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness," says Paul, "and make manifest the counsels of our hearts!" (1 Cor. 4:5). Picture our thoughts being recorded on a spiritual tape recorder. Not just our thoughts, but the feelings and motives behind them as we reason about the things of God and decide what we're going to do about them! Imagine having our thoughts played back along with intentions, desires, and feelings which prompted our thoughts! Wow! When God challenges us to work hard and earn a good job with

Him in the future, He knows exactly what we think of that invitation and what we mean to do about it.



GIVE ACCOUNT. As we come to vs. 13, the writer shifts from the Word of God to God Himself. We are to picture all things as lying "naked and bare" before His eyes. It is the task of God's Word to see that nothing is hidden from God in any way. So when God speaks to us in any manner, He knows every detail of our reaction to it. Thus when we stand before Him in that

day we won't have a single excuse for our failure to act on His promises. If we say we didn't understand Him, that we weren't sure the Bible meant what it said, He will know how much light we had and how we acted on that light. When He assigns us our future status (jobs), it will be a just decision. We will not have a single complaint. The recording of our thoughts and motives will prove Him to be right. We may see ourselves as fairly good Christians, but in the day when we stand before Him, stripped and naked of all pretence, we will be seen as we really are. Before His holy presence we may want to hang our heads in shame for the way we've treated Him and the opportunity He has given us. We'll wish we'd forsaken everything for Him, but it will be too late. If I read the author correctly, we won't even be able to hang our heads in shame. He has chosen a remarkable word from the Greek to picture our nakedness before God. We are to see a man being led to judgment with a knife point held under his chin so that he can't bow his head. He has to look the judge squarely in the face, unable to turn his face aside in shame. This is the writer's way of exhorting his readers to heed God's voice NOW and act on Jesus' Word. He doesn't want them ashamed to look the Lord in the face on that day.

JESUS, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

14. Seeing then, that Jesus the Son of God is our great high priest who has passed through the heavens into the very presence of God, let's stand firm in our faith.



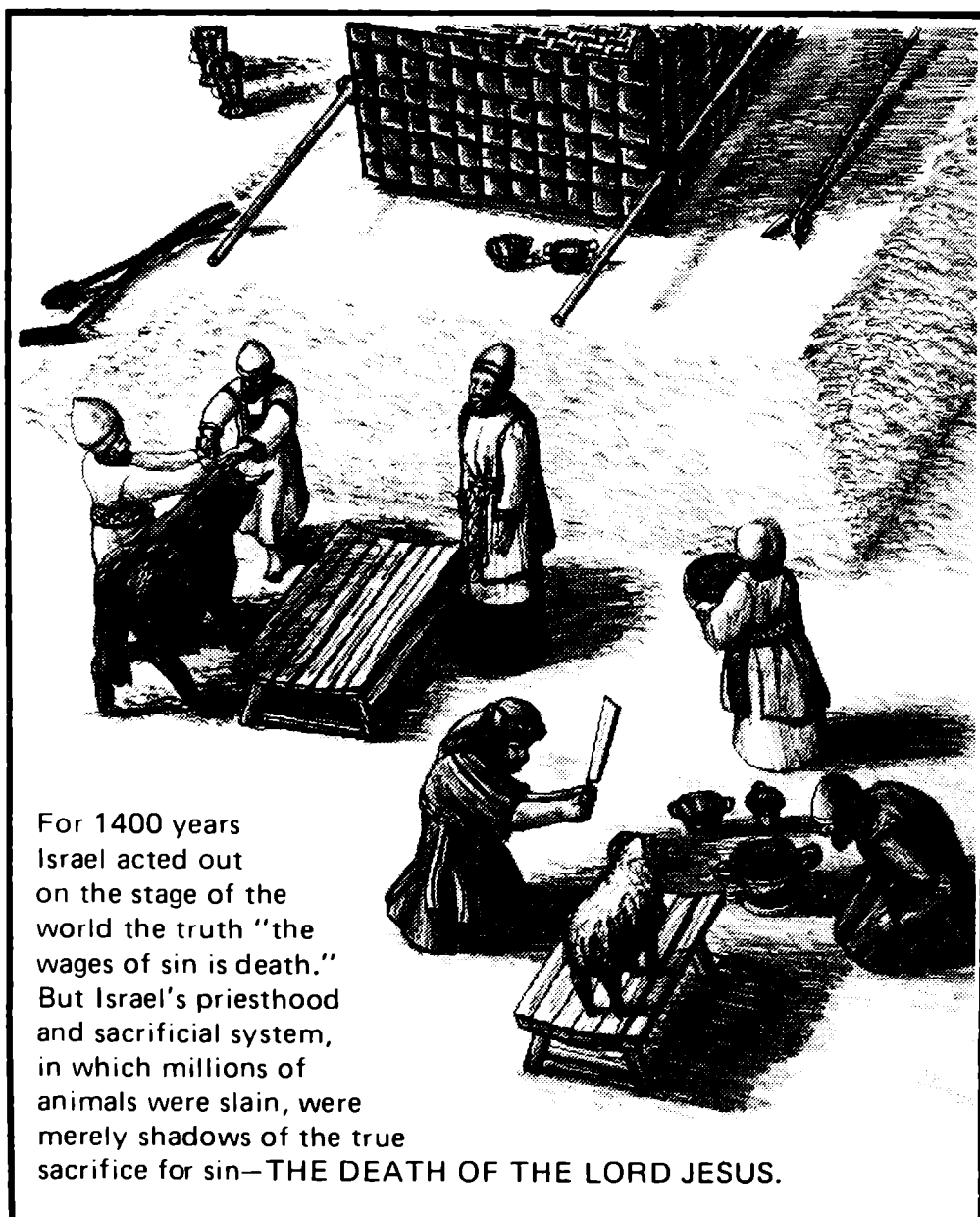
SEEING THEN. Our writer has finished comparing Jesus with Moses, a comparison which asked his readers to consider the Lord as "God's apostle and high priest, Who was faithful to God as was Moses" (3:1,2). It should be obvious to anyone which of these two leaders was superior to the other. As great as he was, Moses was unable to lead his people into the "rest" of

Canaan, whereas Jesus is fully able to lead His people into the “rest” of God. With that comparison finished, our writer moves to the central theme of his letter. He can now bring forth the great truth that was on his heart when he began this letter—the priesthood of Christ. For the next six chapters (5-10) he will be explaining what it means to have Jesus as our high priest. He will do it by contrasting the earthly system of the Jew’s religion, with the priesthood at the center, with the heavenly ministry of Jesus as the true high priest. This great emphasis on the priesthood of Christ suggests that some Jewish believers felt there was no priesthood in Christianity. That, of course, would make Christianity inferior to Judaism, and justify their return to the old way. Therefore, our writer must show that Christianity not only has a high priest, but that He is superior to Aaron, God’s personally appointed high priest of Israel. If the Jewish believers could be shown that there really was a high priest in Christianity to Whom they could look for help, then they would be inclined to heed the writer’s exhortation to stand firm in the faith.



GREAT. Earlier in his letter, our writer referred to Jesus as a high priest, but here he adds the word, “great.” This is his way of contrasting Him with the Jewish high priest. As we begin this study of Jesus’ priesthood, bear in mind that it is set against the history of the Israelites in the wilderness. The entire book of Hebrews, in fact, is laid against the system of religion God gave through Moses at Mt. Sinai. Our writer is thinking of Aaron, the first high priest, and his annual appearance in the tabernacle on behalf of the Jewish people, as they wandered those 40 years. Now the word, “great” is very emphatic in the Greek. And why he is so great is alluded to in this verse: (1) He ministered in a heavenly sanctuary, not an earthly one as did Aaron. Jesus “passed through the heavens,” so that He now carries on His ministry in the spirit. (2) Through His own obedience and faithfulness, the Lord Jesus has been exalted to the place of supreme power. These two qualities, which

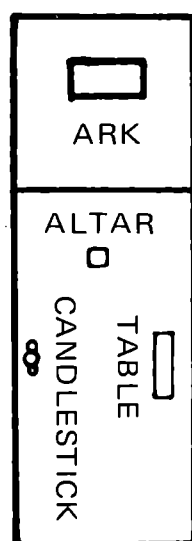
make Him greater than Aaron will be developed in detail as we proceed. Further indication of His greatness is seen in His title; "Jesus the Son of God." "Jesus" is His human name. It refers to His complete humanity and His ability to sympathize with our weaknesses. "The Son of God," indicates His deity. By this He has the power to do all that is in His heart for His people, because He feels for them. When we consider that Jesus is alive and operating in the heavenly sanctuary, as compared with the few moments Aaron spent before God in the earthly tabernacle once a year, the Lord's superiority over him is obvious.





PRIEST. The sacrificial system of the O. T. with its offerings and priesthood at the center, was established by God as a giant visual aid. For 1400 years the nation acted out, on the stage of the world, the truth "the wages of sin is death." But Israel's dramatic rituals, in which millions of animals were slain, were merely shadows of the true sacrifice for sin—the death of the Lord Jesus. In the appointed time, Jesus came and died for our sins. With His sacrifice accepted by the Father He now has the joy of applying its benefits to His people. This is what He does as our high priest. From His place in heaven, or put another way, through the Holy Spirit, He applies the cleansing power of His blood to our

"PASSED THROUGH THE HEAVENS"



TABERNACLE



TRUE
SACRIFICE



OUR BODY
AS TEMPLE OF
HOLY SPIRIT

The statement, "passed through the heavens" is significant. Those words tell us that Jesus' priesthood is heavenly and spiritual, making obsolete all forms of **earthly worship**. No longer can anyone approach God by **any** physical means. He can only be approached "in spirit" (Jo. 4:24). But how is it done? Once our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit, the imagination becomes the true sanctuary of the soul (I Cor. 6:19). It is the highest task of the imagination to give reality to the unseen Lord. And it is here in the "secret place" that we worship Him in spirit (Ps. 91:1).

consciences. (This truth is expanded later on). This is why we don't remember our sins, but forget them day by day. With the consciousness of sin washed away, we feel free to draw close to the Lord. As we "cuddle" up to Him, by faith, we feel no shame. We approach God's throne without the slightest worry over sin. In the O. T. ritual, there was no such purging of the conscience. The people remembered their sins as they offered one sacrifice after another. So it is a precious thing that our high priest does for us. It will become more precious as our study continues. The old Jewish system (Judaism) merely pictured this great work of our Lord. That is the truth our writer seeks to bring to his readers. If they grasp it, they won't want to trade the reality of Christ for the symbolism of Judaism.

"Did Jesus' exaltation change His humanity in any way?"

15. Our high priest, you see, is not one Who is so far beyond us that He can't sympathize with our weaknesses. To the contrary, during His earthly life He experienced the full force of human temptation, yet did not sin. 16. Therefore let us come to the throne of our gracious God with boldness that we might receive mercy for our failures and grace to help us in the moment of need.



NOT BEYOND. Jewish children were taught that God came down to speak to their ancestors at Mt. Sinai, but that He was so holy, no one was allowed to come near the mountain (Ex. 19:12). They grew up believing He was utterly removed from them, that no man could see Him and live (Jud. 13:22). To them, God was untouchable, living in a realm totally beyond all human experience. He was so different from man, they thought that there was no way for Him to enter into their experience or for them to enter His. Therefore the Christian teaching that God became a man, entering fully into human experience, was a staggering idea. It was

brand new, revolutionary. Then to learn that the God/Man ascended into heaven, and is even now seated in the place of supreme power—AS A MAN—is one of the most startling things a Jew could hear. But the truth our writer wants us to grasp is that even though Jesus is so highly exalted, He is in no way removed from us. His divine glory and priesthood are not a barrier to fellowship. To the contrary, they are meant to DRAW us to Him. When Jesus ascended, He did not shed His humanity. He took every bit of His human experience with Him. That means we've got a Friend in the most holy place. And because He understands what we're going through and how we feel, He is ready to use His power and position to help us. He wants us to come to Him and take advantage of all that He can do for us as our high priest. We can because He is one of us.



TEMPTATION. When Jesus came into this world as a man, it was necessary that He experience temptation the same as we. We should be careful to note, however, that having a nature subject to temptation is NOT sin. No matter what kind of a nature a person has, there is no sin until he **yields** to its demands. Equipped with our nature, the Lord suffered the same temptations we do, without once yielding to any of them. Only the person who withstands temptation really knows its **full force**. Those who give in never experience the full power of evil. Therefore our Lord Jesus was tempted beyond anything we know. There are those who teach that Jesus was tempted in every way, with the exception of sin. That He could not be tempted to sin. Such a teaching destroys the whole meaning of His temptation. It is **at the point of sin** that we need His help as our high priest. And there would be no way for Him to help us in this matter, unless He Himself had experienced the same temptation. Now it's true that He could not be tempted with regard to **PREVIOUS** sin. That is, He didn't know the power of **sins committed**. This is what He meant when He said, "The prince of this world. . .hath no-

thing in Me!” (Jo. 14:30). There was no committed sin in Jesus for Satan to use, as there is in us. However, He didn’t need to know that temptation. He had already withstood GREATER temptation in refusing to do evil at all. In resisting sin totally, He endured the full force of temptation. Besides, if Jesus were immune to sin, how could He be our example? (1 Pet. 2:21). How could we follow Him? He definitely knew what it was to be tempted to do His own will, versus His Father’s (Matt. 26:39).

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When Jesus came into this world as a man, it was necessary that He experience temptation the same as we. In resisting sin totally, He endured the full force of temptation. He is our example, in that He could have sinned, but didn’t.

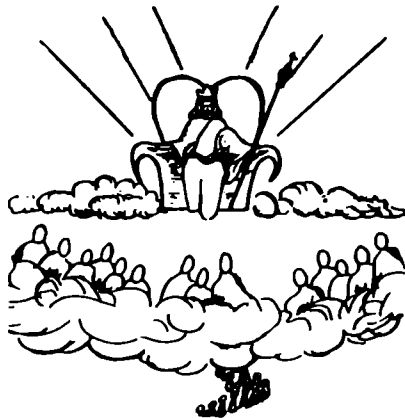


BOLDNESS. Since we are God’s sons, born of His Spirit, it is Jesus’ primary task, as our high priest, to make us **comfortable** in the presence of our Holy Father. It is His job to see that the most joyous fellowship exists between us and God. Now that’s some job when you consider that we still sin. Sinners naturally

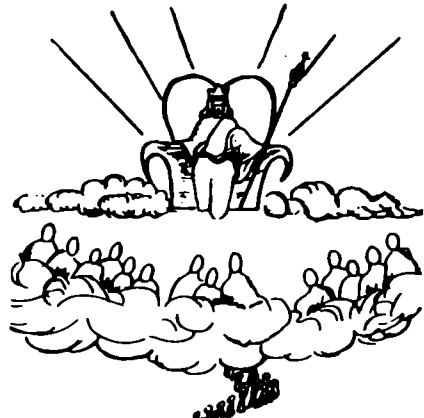
shy away from the majesty of holiness. We wish we didn't sin, but we do—continually. We give in to our old natures all the time. Therefore we need a full time high priest and Jesus fills the bill perfectly. Because He knows **by experience** how we feel and what is needed to make us at home with God, He established the "throne of

THE CHRISTIAN'S TWO THRONES

THRONE OF GRACE



THRONE OF JUDGMENT



See those two thrones? Well, they're NOT two thrones. They are the **same** throne. The only difference is **WHO** is seated on them. When a merciful and compassionate high priest is on the throne, it is called, "the throne of grace." When "the One to Whom we must give an account" is on the throne, it is called, the "judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). All during our lives on earth, there is **NO** judge on the throne. Judgment comes after we die (Heb. 9:27). Until death strikes our bodies, we have the glorious privilege of finding our high priest on the throne. He is there to **HELP** us, not judge us, no matter how often we have to come. When we die, it's a different matter. Our Savior becomes our Judge, and it is doubtful if anyone will come boldly to that throne. Every one of us should take full advantage of the "throne of Grace," while mercy and grace await us in boundless measure.

grace.” What throne is that? It’s God’s throne, with a sympathetic Savior seated on it, rather than a Judge. It is because HE is on that throne, that we’re invited to come boldly. What is there to fear? No one’s going to judge us, only help us. When we come we receive two things. (1) Mercy. We need that first, since we sin so much. Confessing our sins should be as normal as breathing. When we say, “I’m sorry, Lord,” our high priest, through the Spirit, says, “It’s all right son, I forgive you.” He can do that, because His work at Calvary paid for EVERY sin in our lives. (2) The second thing He does is shower God’s grace on us. What does that mean? Through the Holy Spirit He transmits God’s desire to embrace us as His sons, even though we have no hope of conquering sin in our lives. With no merits of our own, we humbly accept the fact that God loves us—AS WE ARE. The realization of this should strip away all pride and make us RUN into His arms! Even if we sin 100 times a day (and we probably exceed that) we can still come with boldness to this throne because it exists for us!

5 1. You know, of course, that every high priest is chosen from among men and is appointed to act on their behalf in making gifts and sacrifices to God for their sins.



YOU KNOW. Our writer has shown that Christ “passed through the heavens,” to take up a priesthood infinitely superior to that of the Jewish high priests (4:14-16). But it wasn’t easy for Jewish Christians reading this letter to see how Jesus qualified for the office, since He was not born of the line of Aaron neither was He trained for the job in His early life. What’s more, during His earthly ministry He didn’t act like a priest. That is, He didn’t go into the temple to perform any of the priestly duties. Everything about Him seemed to contradict the Jewish idea of the priesthood. Therefore it was necessary for the writer to discuss the qualifications of a high priest and show that Jesus had them. There are FIVE things.

about the priesthood every Jew should know, two of which were absolutely essential: (1) the high priest had to be a MAN, (2) he also had to be APPOINTED by God. Beyond that, the high priest was to act on behalf of man, even as a prophet acts on behalf of God. However, his primary task was to take care of the sins of his fellow men. Sin separates people from God. Consequently it was the chief work of the high priest to offer sacrifices that would remove the sin barrier and restore his people to favor with God. The expression "gifts and sacrifices" refers to two kinds of offerings for sin. The "gifts" were bloodless meal offerings, the "sacrifices" refer to bulls and goats, implying the shedding of the blood of the victim. Already we can see how the work of the Jewish high priest was simply a visual aid pointing to the work that Jesus would do in removing the sin barrier between us and God.

"Why is being a man so vital to the priesthood?"

2. It is his ability to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward that qualified the high priest to represent his fellow men. He knows what it is like to be weak, for he too is bombarded with temptations. 3. And because he is also prone to weakness, he is obliged to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for those of the people.



DEAL GENTLY. The fact that the high priest deals with the sin of his fellow men, demands that he have genuine compassion for sinners. This is why no one but a HUMAN can hold the job. Only a person who knows what it is like to be weak can possibly sympathize with those who are weak. The priest who realizes his own weakness, finds it easy to have compassion on the ignorant and wayward. And certainly human weakness was in Aaron and every high priest after him. The writer selects a wonderful word to describe how the high priest is to deal with his fellow men. We've translated it "deal gently," but unfortunately it is one of those Gk. words which cannot be translated into English.

The word is “metriophatein,” and it describes a feeling somewhere between being angry with people because they sin and not caring whether they do or not. In other words, he can’t be tough and he can’t be lenient. We have no word in our language to describe this moderate feeling. The high priest was supposed to be able to bear with sinners no matter how often they sinned, without becoming annoyed at them. At the same time he could not side with them in their sin. Imagine a priest who never once got upset with you even though you never learned your lesson and foolishly sinned again and again, and at the same time you knew he did not condone your evil. Well, that’s what the Jewish high priest **was supposed** to be like. We don’t find anyone like that until we come to God’s true high priest, our Lord Jesus. He never becomes irritated or exasperated when we do the same things over and over. At the same time He lets us know when we’re wrong and is ready to help us do what is right. He’s some high priest.



WEAK. The sympathy a high priest feels for his people grows out of an awareness of his **own** weakness. When we trace the history of the Jewish priesthood, we see that it truly was weak. Aaron, the first high priest, the one appointed by God, yielded feebly to the people’s wishes and made them a golden calf. Those who followed him in succession were sometimes so bad that God had to deal with them directly. Therefore every high priest in the line of Aaron was not only prone to weakness, but yielded to temptation. As a result, he had to offer sacrifices for **his own sins** as well as those of the people. This is clearly seen on the Day of Atonement when the high priest had to offer a bull for his own sins before he could offer a goat for the sins of the people (Lev. 16:6). The fact that there has been no priest in the line of Aaron who was without personal guilt implies that the Levitical priesthood was only temporary and merely served as a type of the true priesthood of Christ. It also seems to hint that the true priesthood would be ordained of a different order, i.e., a line other than Aaron.

We should note that there was one class of sinner for whom the priest could NOT offer a sacrifice—the one who deliberately set himself **against** the revealed will of God. It was not a matter of weakness or overpowering temptation, but open eyed, calculated defiance in the face of God’s will. There is no sacrifice for the man who blasphemes God and denies His Lordship as we’ll see later on (10:26-29). It is the same as spitting in the face of God. Sacrifices are for those who **seek** forgiveness. There are none for blasphemous rebels.



Aaron, the first high priest, the one appointed by God, yielded feebly to the people’s wishes and made them a golden calf.

4. Obviously men cannot appoint themselves high priest. This is an honor which no man can assume unless he is called by God, as was Aaron.



CALLED. The ministry of high priest is not a work one takes up as though choosing a career. It is useless to seek to become a high priest. Why? A high priest represents people before God and only God can say who will serve in His presence. Among all the Jewish priests, only Aaron was called by God personally (Ex. 28:1). From then on all the priests were to be taken from the tribe of Levi, and particularly from the line of Aaron. In time the selection of the priests became confused, especially during the exile in Babylon. History provides us with a number of instances where the office was acquired by force and fraud. Of course, that didn't make them God's servants. By and large, the Jews believed a person was privileged to hold the office by the mere fact of birth, i.e., in the line of Aaron. But this is the very point the writer wishes to correct. Birth has nothing to do with it. The only reason anyone has a right to the office is because he is called of God. This is the way Aaron came to it, and later the writer will show that this is the way Jesus came to it. So while our Lord is not of the line of Aaron, He was called to the priesthood the same as Aaron. So far in these first four verses we have observed the five things every Jew should know about the priesthood: (1) the high priest has to be a man, (2) he was to act on behalf of men, (3) his job was to offer sacrifices for man's sins, (4) he had to be sympathetic, yet not overly lenient, (5) he had to be called by God.

"How, exactly, did Jesus get the job of high priest?"

5. And so Christ did not take to Himself the honor of being high priest, but was raised to that position when God said to Him:

"You are My Son, today I have become Your Father!"

6. and He also said this:

"You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedec."



RAISED. Our author is ready to show how Christ meets the two essential qualifications for the high priesthood, i.e., humanity and divine call. Even though Jesus is God's own Son, He did not presume to step into the office on His own. He was called to it. To prove that Jesus was called by God, the writer puts together two passages from the O.T., Psa. 2:7 and Psa. 110:4. First, Jesus actually heard the voice of God announce that He was the Son of God. The words, "You are My Son," were spoken at His baptism. They establish that He is suited for the task, for who can be more holy than God's own Son! However, His actual appointment as high priest is found in the second quote, "You are a priest forever, etc. . . ." But when did Jesus hear this announcement? Probably while being enthroned in heaven after He had finished His work on earth. And yet, our writer would have us to understand that Jesus **was aware** of His appointment during His earthly ministry. According to 10:5-10 we can assume that our Lord was a priest from the moment of His birth. Yet his actual installation in the office did not take effect until He was exalted. The moment He was enthroned, is probably when we are to picture Him as hearing the words, "You are My Son. . . ." "You are a priest forever!"



MELCHIZEDEC. The fact that Jesus is a priest of another order, one which was in operation **BEFORE** the line of Aaron was established, is the **KEY** to the superiority of His priesthood. We first see Melchizedec as the king-priest of Jerusalem. When Abraham was returning from rescuing Lot from the five kings who had taken him captive, his caravan was halted by this "priest of God Most High." Then Abraham did an astonishing thing—he paid tithes to this priest (Gen. 14:18-20). It is remarkable

to find a passage in the Law which speaks of a priesthood existing **before the time of Aaron**, and to see him receive tithes from no less a person than the father of the nation of Israel. Abraham, a godly man, wouldn't pay tithes to **just anyone**. It is not unlikely that our writer was the first person to connect the king-priest references to Melchizedec with Christ. This, of course, makes His priesthood both **ROYAL** and **PERPETUAL**, thereby surpassing the priesthood of Aaron in both rank and dignity. Later, in Ch. Seven, the author will present a full discussion of Melchizedec. He is preparing the way for that discussion by introducing his name here.

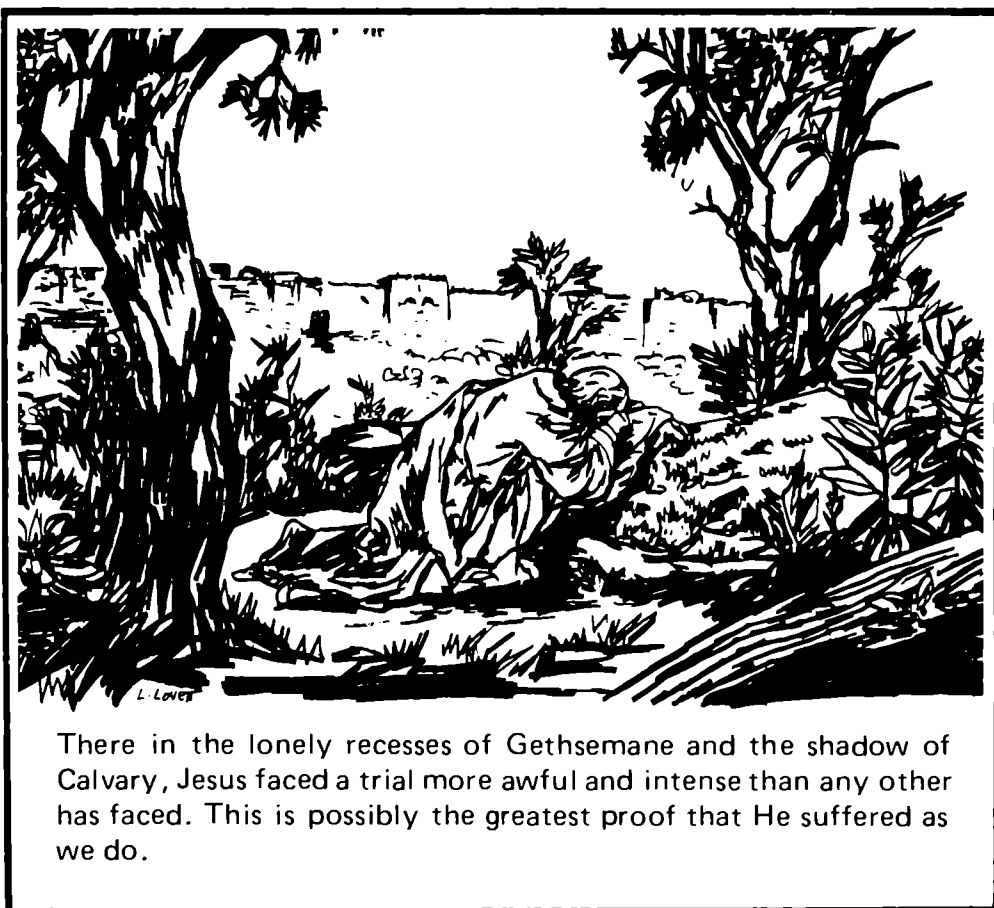
"How did Jesus meet the second requirement?"

7. During His earthly life, Jesus pleaded with the One Who could save Him from death. And while He prayed in desperation and cried out with great agony of soul, He was heard because of His reverent submission to God.



PLEADED. We've seen how Jesus was appointed our high priest by a direct command of God. Now the author must show how the Lord meets the second requirement, i.e., that He is as human as the rest of us. To do this, he has chosen to give us a picture of Jesus struggling in prayer. That's certainly a human situation. During His earthly life, Jesus went through trials and suffering that equipped Him to be a merciful and compassionate high priest. Undoubtedly the writer is thinking of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-44). This is possibly the greatest proof that He suffered as we do. There in the lonely recesses of Gethsemane and the shadow of Calvary, He faced a trial more awful and intense than any other has faced. His bloody sweat and desperate cries to God are proof that He made no use of supernatural resources to get out of the situation. But what, exactly, did he pray for? It is clear from His own words that He dreaded the bitter "cup" He was about to drink (Matt. 26:39). That cup was the **wrath of God**

against all sinners. To drink it meant spiritual death, i.e., separation from God. For Jesus, Who knew no sin, to become as the **ONLY** sinner in the world and endure God's wrath for that sin, was something from which He cringed in horror. We can't fathom what it must be like for God to lay the "iniquity of us all," on someone Who was holy. We must see Him as a **man**, appalled by what was ahead of Him. The very thought of separation from God must have seemed too much for Him to bear—yet He suffered. In 12:2 we will learn that the joy which awaited Him on the **other side** of Calvary made it possible for Him to bear this awful burden.



WAS HEARD. The pressure on Jesus in the garden was awful. He needed help, divine help. He faced this trial as a **man**, enjoying **NO** advantage whatever. He cried to God as we cry. God heeded His cry, not because this was His own Son pleading with Him, nor yet because His Son's heart was about to break with grief

(Mk. 14:34). Jesus was heard because of His yieldedness, His submissive trust in the Father. Never had He disobeyed God. Now He was about to learn how bitter obedience can be. He shrank from that “cup,” nevertheless He submitted saying, “Not My will, but Thine be done.” But God did NOT answer His specific request, i.e., save Him from death. God’s answer WAS the “cup.” Jesus had to die as the world’s only sinner. Yet God did answer in His own way. He gave Jesus the HELP He needed to drink the cup (Luke 22:43). After He had drained that awful cup, God exalted Him—A MAN—as our high priest. Now He was **qualified**. Until He had suffered this experience, He wasn’t. After enduring the **full force of temptation**, He understands the weakness of the flesh better than any other man. Through it He learned what it is like to be in the center of God’s will and suffer. He also knows how we feel when our prayers are **not answered**, and what it is like to bow to the will of God when things don’t go our way. That’s why it is so nice to have Jesus on the throne today. He knows by **human experience** everything we go through, and more.

8. For even though He was God’s Son, He had to learn what it is like for a man to obey God. The only place He could learn it was in the school of suffering. 9. And now, having graduated through perfect obedience, He has become the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. 10. This is why God designated Him a high priest according to the order of Melchizedec.



SUFFERING. The idea of God suffering or obeying seems incredible. How could the Most High God take orders from anyone? There’s only one way—by becoming a MAN, and submitting Himself to the divine will the same as **any Christian** does. The apostle Paul provides the details as to how God did this. He tells how Jesus emptied Himself of the attributes of majesty (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, etc.) and allowed Himself to be born into the human stream (Phil. 2:5-11). He entered the race the same as any other man,



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Jesus entered the human race the same as any other man, by physical birth as an infant. Although He was God incarnate, He had to grow in knowledge and wisdom the same as we do.

by physical birth as an infant. He arrived with a **BLANK MIND**, and had to grow in knowledge and wisdom, the same as we do (Lk. 2:52). Stripped of foreknowledge and other supernatural abilities, He climbed the steps to maturity. Although He was God incarnate, He had to learn the lessons of life the same as the rest of us. It is astonishing that God would do this in order to know what it is like to be a **MAN**. It is true, of course, that

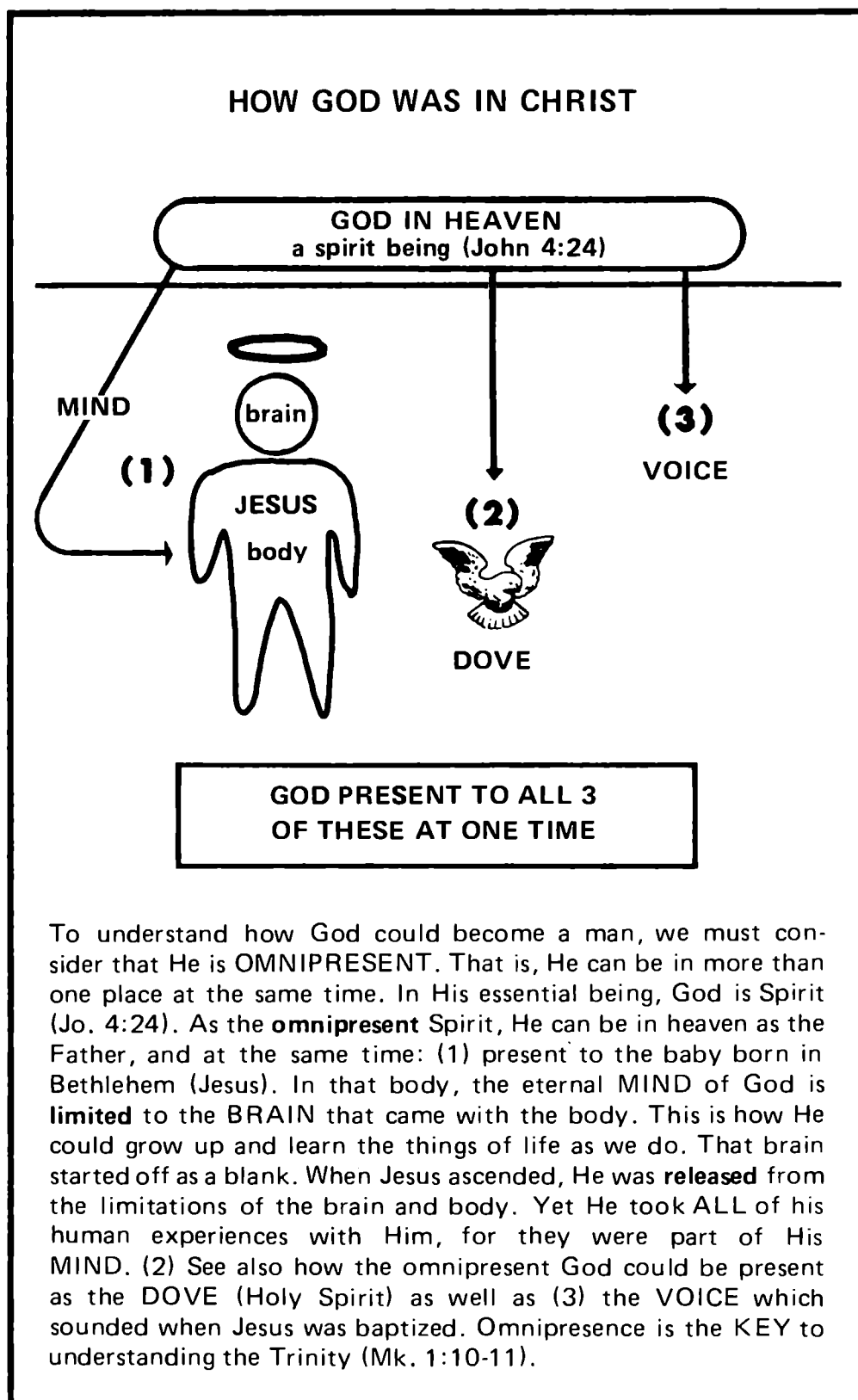
God knew about temptation and suffering **by omniscience**. Now He knows **by experience**—and there is a difference. Without this experience, He could neither save nor judge men. Loving us as He does, He was willing to go through a human life, with its suffering, in order to redeem us and bring us to maturity.



LEARN. Son of God that He was, there was no way for Jesus to be a man and be exempt from the learning process. He set aside His prerogatives for escaping human trials and surrendered Himself to go through the school of suffering. This was the only way He could qualify as our high priest. But it wasn't in this school that Jesus **learned** to obey. He **always wanted** to obey His Father, even from the beginning. But as He set Himself to live a life of obedience to God, He found that when a man desires to do God's will—in the kind of a world we live in—he's going to suffer for it (2 Tim. 3:12). It wasn't easy for Jesus knowing He was going to suffer every time He elected to obey God. And as His ministry progressed, obedience got tougher and tougher. Finally there in the recesses of Gethsemane, He learned what it costs a man to go all the way with God. He now had come all the way. It cost Jesus the cross to obey God. To Him, learning and dying were the same thing. When He died He learned the price tag of complete obedience. Why is this vital? Because the Lord asks the same thing of us. Every believer is expected to give complete obedience, to go all the way with Jesus. And here's the fairness of it—the Lord is not asking us to do something that He Himself hasn't done. Having paid the price of obedience Himself, He knows what it costs us.



GRADUATED. Imagine God going to school! Yet that's exactly what happened. Jesus went through the school of suffering in order to be trained for the priesthood (remember: priests have to be men). He graduated from that school fully disciplined in all that God desired of Him. Not only did He learn the cost of obedience and experience all that men feel in their weak-



nesses, He also offered Himself for their sins. The writer says two things resulted from His graduation: (1) He became the source of salvation for all who obey Him (we now obey Him as He obeyed the Father), (2) He was

designated our high priest. The point to remember is that He did this AS A MAN . . . and that He is STILL a man. By His personal obedience (as a man) the Lord produced the righteousness that should have been found in Adam. Adam disobeyed and fell. His nature became corrupt. He had no righteousness to pass on to his heirs. But Jesus, the last Adam, DID obey God and was righteous in all things. There was NO evil in Him. His **righteous nature** is passed on to all those born of Him. That's how He becomes the source of spiritual life to all those who obey Him, i.e., obey His gospel. His obedience produced the righteousness needed to live with a holy God, and our obedience brings that same righteousness to us. When we obey the command to believe His Word, we receive His Holy Spirit and holy nature.

Our writer comes to an abrupt halt in his discussion of the high priesthood of Christ. Having already said some very profound things, he is about to delve into a full blown discussion of the relationship of Christ to Melchizedec. But then he realizes the material is terribly deep. The trouble, though, is not with the truth he is presenting, but with the immaturity of his readers. So he pauses to rebuke them for being spiritual infants, devoting all of Chapter Six to the most grave warning he has given so far. Once that is done, he will again take up the matter of Christ as our high priest. Verse 10 of this chapter is clearly repeated at the end of Chapter Six (6:20).

11. Concerning the matter of Christ's priesthood and how it relates to Melchizedec, there is a great deal that we want to say. But how am I going to explain it to you, seeing your spiritual faculties have become so sluggish. 12. After all this time, you should be teachers. Instead, you are like babies who suck on a bottle be-

cause they are not old enough to chew solid food. And because of that, it is necessary for you to be taught the simplest facts of God's truth all over again.



EXPLAIN. Our writer has been sailing along with his teaching on Jesus' priesthood when it struck him—Hey! My readers can't handle this. They're too immature for anything this deep! How disappointing. He has these fantastic truths to share with them, but hesitates because of their immaturity. In the warning of Chapter Six he will try to arouse their slumbering minds with a stinging rebuke. Now these are not exactly new Christians. It has been 30 years or more since the gospel exploded at Pentecost and was carried by Jews throughout the world. These believers had plenty of time to grow up as mature Christians, but they didn't take the trouble to learn. Instead they had become satisfied with the ABC'S of the gospel, content to coast along with the mere basics of Christian truth. So our writer stops to rebuke them for their failure to plunge into the deeper things of the Word and grow in their understanding of divine revelation. They had had plenty of teaching, but it didn't do them any good. They didn't listen well enough to get out of the new convert's class. They had become so dull mentally, that they had gone backwards to the place where it was necessary for someone to teach them the basics again. This is what is so disturbing to the writer. If they are that dull, how in the world could they possibly understand the mystery of Melchizedec? It is their lethargy and arrested development that is so distressing to our author.



MILK. We are face to face with a problem that has plagued the church in every generation—the matter of believers refusing to grow up. Masses of Christians are satisfied with the baby steps of the gospel and don't advance beyond that point. They like the "honeymoon" stage of Christianity and never get down to the business of growing up in Christ. Their lives show it, too.

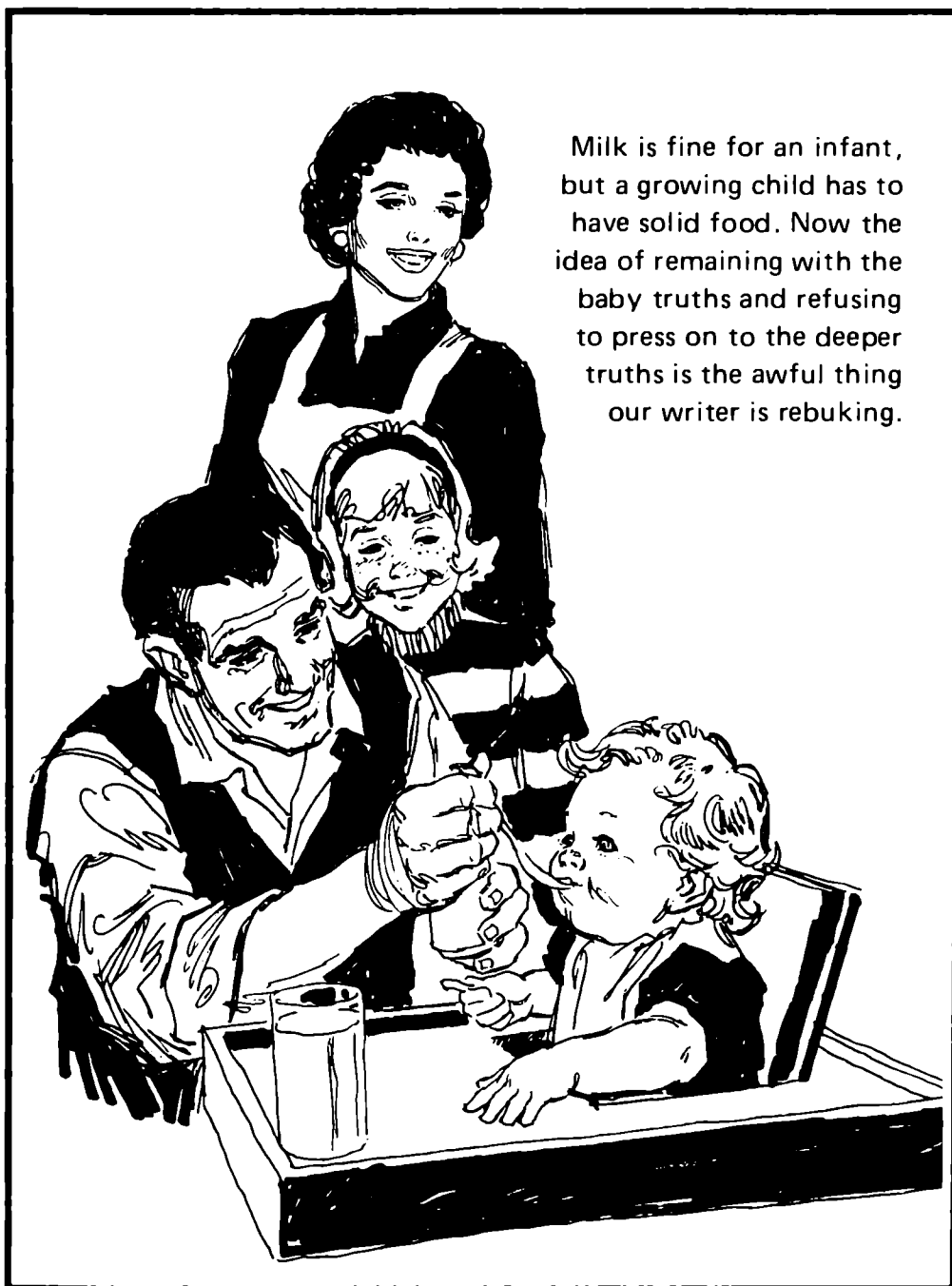
30, 40 and even 60 years later, they're still the same people. There's no real development after the first flush of salvation. They are touchy, lose their tempers just as easily, spend little time in the Word, they don't witness for Christ and they are critical of others. You can't give them any responsibility. And if you happen to say the wrong thing to them, they'll quit and go home. Even though they have been saved for years, they're still spiritual infants and have to be treated that way. It's a hard fact of life that if you don't USE it, you LOSE it. That applies to a person's spiritual faculties as well as to the strengths of his body. There is no way for the mind to stand still and retain what a person has been taught. Unless a Christian digests the truths he receives and digs for more, he will go backwards spiritually. It's a law of life. That's what had happened to these Hebrew Christians. They're still "on the bottle" of God's Word even though they have been believers for years. To see a 30 year old man still sucking on a bottle is a sight from which people turn their eyes. Our writer is thinking how rough it is going to be to explain the glorious truth of Christ's priesthood to these babies.

"Why is it so unhealthy for Christians to stay on baby food?"

13. How can those who restrict themselves to baby food really know what the Christian life is all about? Such people are spiritual infants. 14. There is no way for them to eat solid food. Only those whose spiritual faculties are developed and trained by use can handle the meat of God's Word. These are adult believers, mature Christians, able to distinguish between truth and error.



SOLID FOOD. The deeper truths of God's Word are solid food. The "milk drinkers," those who limit themselves to the salvation truths, cannot fathom the advanced truths of divine revelation. This is sad, for



Milk is fine for an infant, but a growing child has to have solid food. Now the idea of remaining with the baby truths and refusing to press on to the deeper truths is the awful thing our writer is rebuking.

there are precious truths in the Word reserved as "hidden wisdom" for those who progress in the Christian life. Those **deeper** truths are needed to make the changes in our lives that God expects. Thus we see that the Bible offers **TWO KINDS** of truths: (1) those that **SAVE** people, (2) and those that **CHANGE** people. The saving truths are baby truths (milk), while the changing truths are deeper truths (solid food). Milk is fine for an infant, but a growing child has to have solid food. Now the idea of remaining with the baby truths and refusing to

press on to the deeper truths is the awful thing our writer is rebuking. What's so awful, is that even salvation becomes shaky to the Christian who doesn't get off the bottle. He constantly needs reassurance that he is saved. He hasn't learned **by experience** to REST in what Christ has done for him and get on with the business of shaping up in the Lord. The writer isn't attacking the "milk of the Word," of course. But he is scolding those who remain on the bottle and refuse to learn to handle the strong meat of the Word. The infant, you see, cannot recognize a life-changing truth when it hits him in the face. Neither can he recognize one inspired by Satan. That is dangerous, especially as we enter the last days.



DISTINGUISH. It is clear that God expects every Christian to be a teacher. As soon as he is saved, he is to feed on the "sincere milk of the Word," as Peter calls it, then advance to the place where he can handle solid food. As he progresses, he develops in knowledge and experience and it isn't long before he finds himself in action. It comes instinctively as he finds those around him who know less than he does. He feels obliged to share what he knows (2 Tim. 2:2). The Lord has commanded all of us to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19 NASV). A noticeable difference between the infant Christian and the mature Christian, is that the babies are **SPECTATORS** and the adults are **PARTICIPATORS**. The infant watches the battle of the Christian life, the adult gets into it. The baby Christian doesn't want to "get involved." He may watch religious broadcasts on TV and go to church on a regular basis, but serving Christ is **NOT** the thrust of his life. His family, friends and job come ahead of Jesus. Every Christian is expected to master God's Word and learn to test ideas by God's Spirit so that he can judge **ANY** teaching which comes before him with respect to truth and error. The mature believer is at ease when someone presents a contrary doctrine. The immature believer is ready to fight. Thus our writer gives us two tests for spiritual infancy: (1) the immature

Christian cannot teach others, (2) neither is he able to distinguish between true and false teachings. Some modern readers could receive a jolt when they apply these two tests to their own lives.

6 1. Now in view of that, I want you to move forward with me and let us press toward maturity together. This means, of course, that we must put an end to all this rehashing of the elementary truths of Christ. You know what I mean—endlessly pointing out that no one can be saved on the basis of works and how one must put his faith in God for salvation. 2. Continual instructions about the different cleansing rites, dwelling on the receiving of spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands, and preoccupation with the resurrection of the dead and the matter of eternal judgment. 3. Lord willing we'll put these things behind us and get on to those things which are more advanced.



TOGETHER. What will our writer do to help those immature Christians? Go back and teach them the elementary truths all over again? No. Their minds need to be stretched. He feels that the doctrine of Christ's priesthood is the very thing they need. If they will reach for it and grasp it, it will cure their mental sluggishness. So he is going to press on with his teaching, at the same time trusting the Holy Spirit to help his readers overcome their dullness. Nothing would be accomplished by going back over the basics again. They've been doing that long enough, even to the point where it was harmful. When a person **fails to advance** in Christian knowledge, his ability to apprehend further truth is blunted by disuse. That could lead to disinterest in the things of Christ, possibly even complete abandonment. So his argument is this: just as a building cannot be erected by endless work on the foundation, neither can Christian maturity be reached by an endless rehashing of the basic truths. Therefore he gives them a list of the

baby truths he means to leave behind as he presses on to a full exposition of Christ's priesthood.



ELEMENTARY. This passage is interesting for it tells us what the early church regarded as Christian basics. Six things apparently made up the instruction given to new converts. (1) There is nothing a man can do to save himself, whether by obedience to the Jewish Law or good works. It is a basic truth that a sinner can no more make himself righteous than a brain surgeon can operate on his own brain. (2) Salvation is a relationship to God which comes only through faith in Christ. (3) They were also taught the different kinds of baptisms, probably the difference between Jewish baptism and Christian baptism. But whether it was a Jewish cleansing or Christian, it was still an elementary matter. (4) The laying on of hands, which signified transferred blessing, was related to the Holy Spirit and the receiving of gifts of the Spirit. At first it was regarded with awe, because it was done by those who actually touched Jesus. Nonetheless it was a baby truth. (5) Another basic was the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the future resurrection of the saints. The new converts must have spent a lot of time speculating about the future body. (6) They also expected the world to be judged at the Lord's return, which they believed would be soon. Surely they devoted much time to debating the final state of the wicked dead and their own eternal status in heaven. These six truths then, were probably the topics taught in the new convert's class, and are the ones the writer feels should be left behind as one presses toward maturity.



GET ON. Are you shocked at what our writer considers baby truths! Why some of these topics are the main themes of many ministers today! There are those who pride themselves on preaching a "simple gospel," when in reality they are confining themselves to one or two of these elementary truths. Think

what it must do to their congregations to keep them on “milk,” rather than giving them “solid food.” Some churches exist on a weekly diet of salvation messages and testimonies. They never get off the bottle. That can only hurt the people. Others dwell almost exclusively on prophecy (resurrection and judgment), because of the excitement associated with those truths. People are naturally curious about the future, so it is easy to draw big crowds. But what happens to the people when they are denied the advanced truths? This is what is so upsetting to our author. There’s nothing wrong with teaching any of these truths, it is **STAYING WITH THEM** to the neglect of deeper truths that he is decrying. That’s why he says in effect, “We’re going to get off that bottle and move on to the “solid food.” His idea of solid food for example, is the truth of Jesus as our high priest. He is satisfied it is the kind of teaching that can lift them out of their babyhood—if **they can grasp it**. Baby truths can’t bring them to the kind of maturity that God knows is so vital to their futures with Him. However he won’t take up that truth again until we come to the end of this chapter. Before he resumes his teaching of Christ’s priesthood he will sound the most severe warning he has delivered so far.

THE THIRD WARNING—vss. 4-8

4. There is no way, you see, to salvage people who come this far and then reject Christ. Why? The enlightenment they have received is once for all. What’s more they have tasted of Christ, heaven’s greatest gift. They’ve experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, 5. tasting the thrill of understanding God’s Word and the spiritual powers of the coming age.



REJECT CHRIST. Our writer realizes his readers have been languishing in the elementary truths and not advancing in the faith as they should. He also knows the danger of it. It is the nature of Christianity

that if a person does not advance, he will fall back. These Hebrew Christians could lapse back into Judaism, and feel all right in doing so since it was established by God. But to do that, they have to turn their backs on Christ. That's the reason for this warning. For if they reject Christ after coming this far, there is no **second chance** to return to Him, no hope of recovery. But what is so shocking about this warning is to learn HOW FAR people can go in experiencing Christ—and still fall away. In the parable of the sower, Jesus taught us that people could receive the Word with joy and appear to be growing for a time. But when persecution comes because of the Word, they fall away. We might not have known how far that truth can be carried were it not for this passage in Hebrews. Many readers are going to be startled to learn how much light one can receive and how much experience he can have with the Lord and still turn around and reject Him.



THIS FAR. Spending as much time as they did on the basics of the Christian life, these readers had plenty of light. For any of them to go back to Judaism would mean a deliberate closing of their eyes to the light they had received. Our author lists the extent of their actual experience in Christianity: (1) **enlightenment**: having heard the gospel, they knew what Christ had done for them. There was nothing lacking in the truth they had received. They understood everything needed for a full commitment of their lives to Jesus; (2) **heaven's gift**: they had experienced Christ (through the Holy Spirit) to know what a fabulous Person He is; (3) **the Holy Spirit's work**: they had enjoyed His working in them to the place where they knew, by experience, He could enable them to do what they could not do on their own; (4) **the good Word of God**: the Spirit's witness had also taught them that God's Word was not only true, but the only explanation for the meaning of life; (5) **spiritual power**: they had actually sampled the powers of the coming age. This probably re-

fers to the gifts associated with Pentecost, as well as authority over agents of the spiritual realm (demons). This list makes up the **basic experience** of Christianity, whereas the first three verses of this chapter give us the **basic truths** of the Christian life. The readers of this letter had BOTH the basic truths of Christ and the basic experience of Christianity, and yet in spite of this the author deems it necessary to warn them that persecution could cause them to turn their backs on Jesus. We will find that the great sin of Hebrews is denying Christ after experiencing such a full range of God’s working in them.

BASIC TRUTHS	BASIC EXPERIENCE
1. Repentance	1. Enlightenment
2. Faith (salvation)	2. Heaven’s gift
3. Baptisms (Jewish and Christian)	3. Partake of the Spirit
4. Laying on of hands (gifts of the Spirit)	4. Word of God
5. Resurrection (prophecy)	5. Spiritual power
6. Judgment (prophecy)	

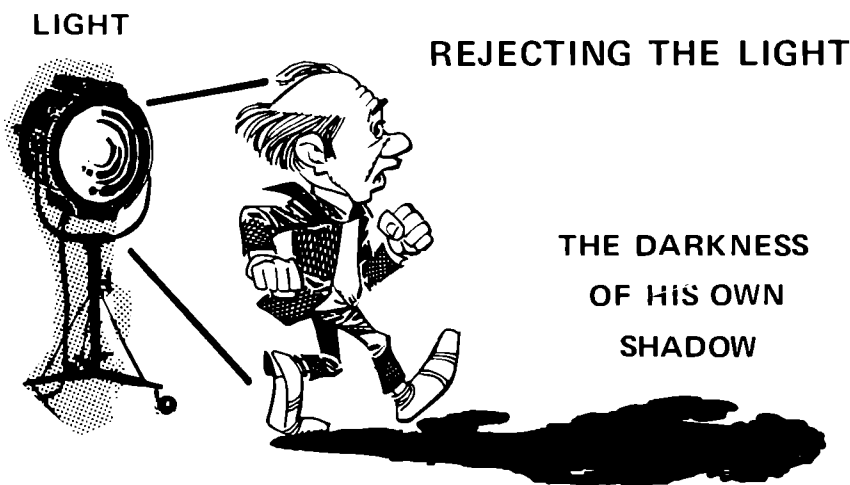
See those two lists? Those are the elementary truths and experiences of the Christian life. When a man came to Christ in those early days, he was taught the basics in a new convert’s class. Beyond that though, he experienced a basic working of God in him that validated what he had been taught. Our author is going to tell us that when a person samples the full range of these basics and then turns his back on Christ—there is no way to renew him to repentance a second time. Rejecting Christ, after partaking of this insight and experience is the great sin of Hebrews.

6. After a person has known the blessedness of all this insight and experience and then falls away, it is impossible for him to be brought to repentance a second time. Having rejected the Son of God, he joins those who condemned Him to death and mocked Him as a

false Messiah, and is ready to crucify Him himself.



IMPOSSIBLE. The gospel which offers fellowship with Jesus, insight into this life and the next, as well as spiritual power, is the best God has to offer. When a person enjoys this blessedness for a time and then decides he doesn't want any part of it, God has nothing else to offer him. For that reason, the writer flatly states that it is impossible for such a rejector to come back to Jesus. The author's use of the word **IMPOSSIBLE** has made this passage a theological battleground for centuries. Scholars debate three possible interpretations. (1) The passage refers to born again believers who reject Christ and are lost forever. (2) The writer is merely giving a hypothetical situation, offering that **IF IT WERE** possible for a true Christian to reject Christ, it would be impossible to renew him to repent-



To sin against light is the one sin, which is by its own nature—incurable. If you turn your back on the light, only darkness is left. Who can see in darkness, whether physical or spiritual? The man who has walked in the light for a time, and then decides it is not for him, turns to walk in the darkness of his own shadow. There is nothing in darkness to turn a person to the light. Suppose Lazarus, after being raised from the dead by Jesus, decided he didn't care for this life, and went out and hanged himself. Could we expect Jesus to raise him a second time? So it is with those who prefer darkness to light. Having experienced the best God has for man, and rejected it, God does not intervene a second time. To do so would impose His will on man.

ance. (3) That such rejectors are NOT Christians at all. They are like Judas, who was one of the Twelve. He sampled all the sweetness and power of the gospel without ever being truly committed to Christ. The first of these views we probably should reject, because there are too many passages which definitely teach the security of the saints, and because this passage clearly teaches the impossibility of repentance after rejecting salvation. The second view has much to commend it, but the warning appears weakened if this is only a hypothetical case. The third view seems more preferable to me, allowing that such rejectors are **non-Christians** growing up as TARES among the WHEAT (Matt. 13:30).



ALL THIS. Baffling, isn't it, to think that a person can sample so much of basic Christianity and still be unsaved, or uncommitted to Christ. Judas is an interesting example. He served with the Lord for over three years and was taught by Him personally. He knew how wonderful Jesus was. He also sampled the power of the Holy Spirit, casting out demons and healing the sick in Jesus' name (Matt. 10:5-8). Yet none of the other disciples suspected he wasn't one of them (John 13:21-22,28). He was the "son of perdition"—all that time (John 17:12). But the question lingers. . . "How can a person experience all this and not be saved?" Easily. There is a great work that God does in people to **BRING** them to salvation, even to the point of experiencing the Holy Spirit's power (Matt. 7:22,23). The unsaved are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). There is no way for them to come to the light (which is Christ) unless God draws them (John 6:44). Since they are held captive by Satan, who **BLINDS** their minds, a tremendous work of the Holy Spirit is needed **IN THEM before** they can do anything about trusting Jesus (2 Cor. 4:4). This process of **countering** Satan's work is called **PRE-SALVATION ILLUMINATION** and consists of the **FIVE** things listed in verses 4 and 5. But you say, "Hey! That's what God does for the true Christian!" You are right. It is the **SAME** work God does in believers. A man can

experience all this BEFORE he is saved and AFTER! He can even join a group of believers and no one will ever know he's not saved.

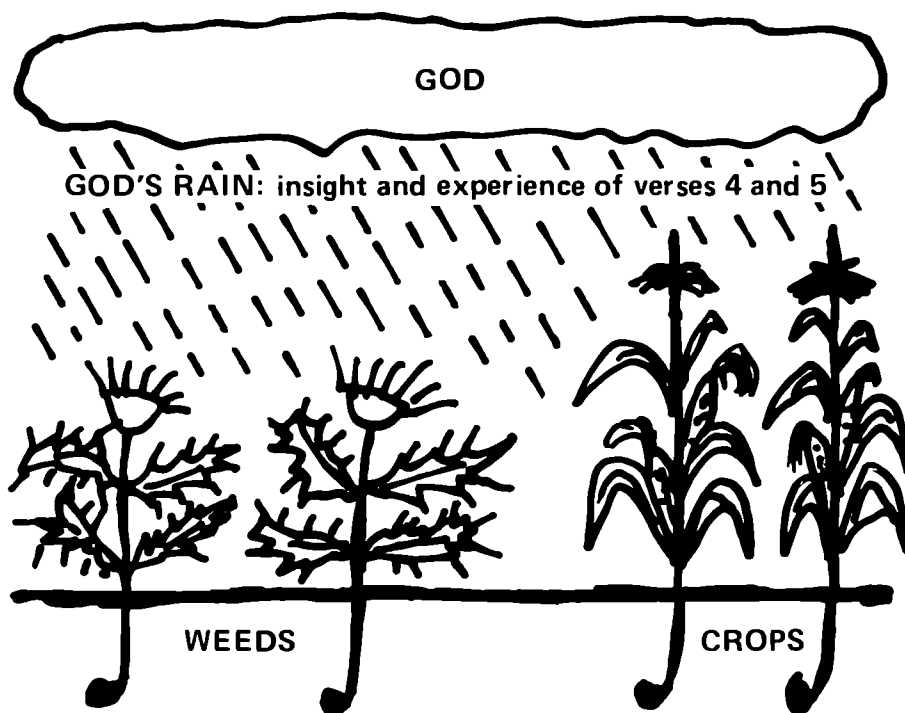


JOINS. These words were written in an age of persecution. In times of comfort, such as we have today, it is hard to distinguish between professing and possessing Christians. Since it doesn't cost anything to participate in Christianity, people come in great numbers. They like its high ideals. But let persecution arise, and we'll be shocked at those who turn from Jesus. There will be a wholesale exodus from the church. All along we considered many to be true believers, when they were only tares. In times of persecution, you see, a man can save his life by denying the Lord. When he does, it becomes clear that his life means more to him than faith in Jesus. The persecution exposes the false condition of his heart. The man who denies Christ in order to survive, clearly prefers physical life to spiritual life. That's his final choice. He has committed the unpardonable sin. The reason it is unpardonable is because he has turned his back on the ONLY way to be saved. It is this willful denial of Christ (persecution exposing the true condition of his heart) that our author describes as the sin from which there is no recovery. When the world sees this man turn from Jesus, it says, "Ah ha! Christianity really is futile after all. Jesus was the imposter the Jews said He was!" Later on the author will discuss the fate of the man who commits this "willful sin" (10: 26–31).

"Could you give us an illustration of what you mean?"

7. Consider the earth and how God's rain falls upon it from time to time. If it yields crops for those who work it, the rain is God's blessing on it. 8. But if the ground persists in bringing forth nothing but thorns and thistles, it is considered worthless. It is all set to be cursed by God and burned off.

THE DRAWING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



(seeds in the heart partake equally of God's rain)

Just as God sends physical rain on the just and unjust, so also does He send His spiritual rain (the Holy Spirit) upon all men equally. "If I be lifted up" said Jesus, "I will draw ALL men unto Myself." (John 12:32). The drawing work of the Spirit consists of the FIVE things we find in vss. 4 & 5. To show that all men partake **equally** of this rain is the point of the author's illustration. See then, how the seeds are already in the ground. The rain does not put them there. It simply brings to fruition what is **already there**. Similarly, God's Spirit does not put a response to the gospel in anyone's heart. He merely waters what is already there. Under this blessed working some hearts bring forth total commitment to Jesus (crops), others bring forth total rejection (weeds). When a man, who has partaken of God's rain finally turns and rejects Jesus, you can be sure that rejection was there (in seed form) all the time.

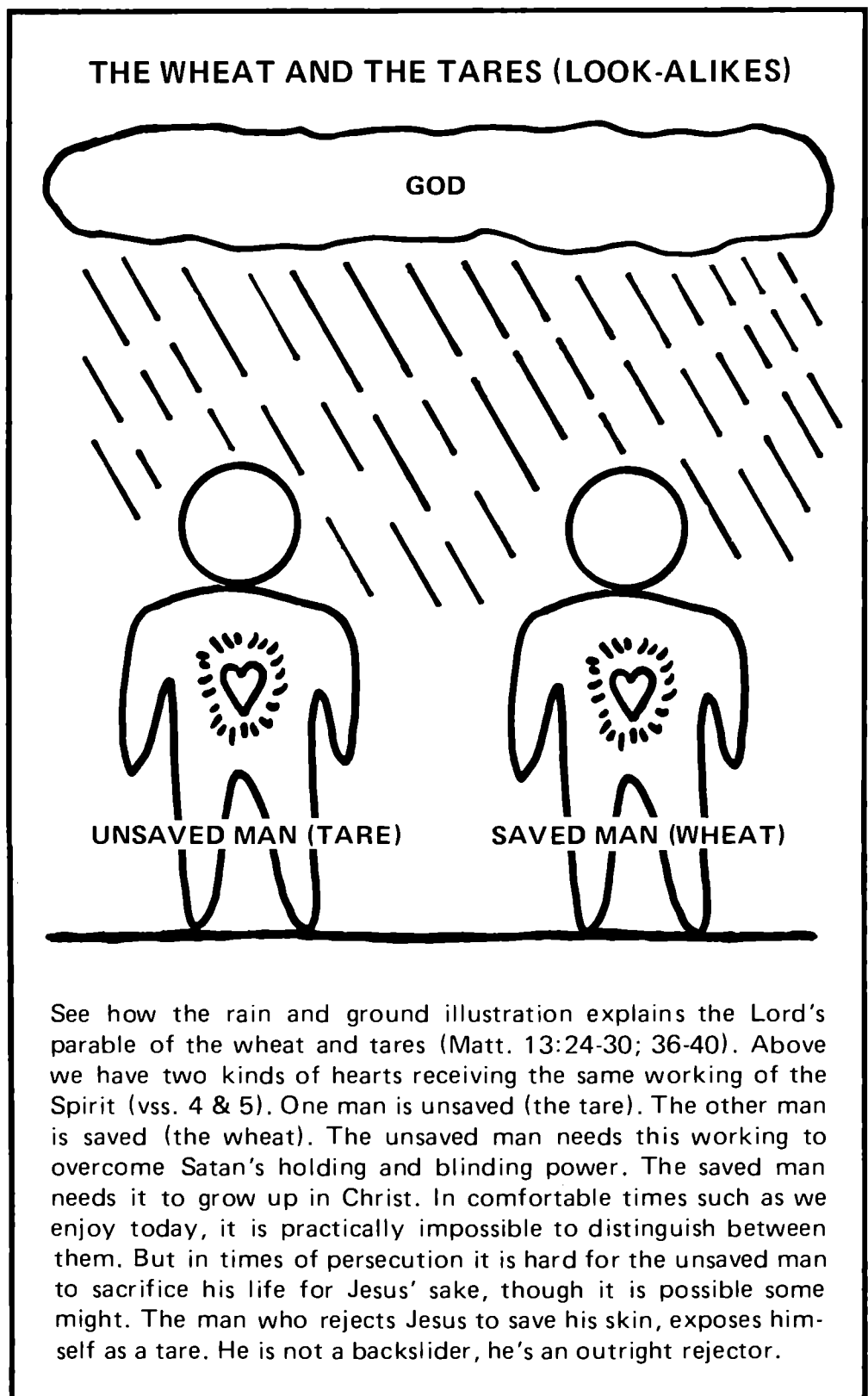


EARTH. To illustrate how ALL men partake of the same working of God's Spirit, our author presents an analogy from nature. Here are two pieces of ground receiving rain from the sky. One parcel brings forth crops, the other weeds. The point to observe is

that both enjoy the **SAME** favorable conditions. The rain, of course, represents the **FIVE** things listed in vss. 4-5, and both parcels are equally blessed by this rain. The fruitful ground represents the true Christian who commits his life to Jesus and bears the kind of fruit that honors the blessing God has showered on him. The unfruitful ground is the unsaved "believer" who, when put to the test, proves himself unworthy of the blessing God has showered on Him. In spite of the fact that he has enjoyed the insight and experience of vss. 4-5, he turns his back on Jesus and there is nothing anyone can do to get him to return. Note particularly that God's rain **DOES NOT** determine the condition of the soil. It merely waters the ground so that what is **already there** can come out. If rejection comes forth, God did not put it there. If total commitment comes forth, God did not put that there either. He merely works in such a way as to bring out the seed that is already in the human heart. He works the same in every heart.



RAIN. Observe that God does not have one kind of rain for the saved and another for the unsaved. There is just **ONE** working of the Spirit for **ALL** men. As rain is poured out from the sky, so is God's Spirit poured out on "all mankind" (Acts 2:17). Some men, in spite of this gracious working will not make a complete commitment to Christ. Nothing short of total trust produces the born-again experience. This means that in spite of all that these people have experienced through the Holy Spirit, they have **NOT** received the gift of eternal life and been baptized into the body of Christ. In other words, **NO CONCEPTION** has taken place. This doesn't mean they haven't received the full blessing of God's Spirit. Indeed they have. They not only **KNOW** what God is waiting to do for them and in them, but they are also **EMPOWERED** (by the Spirit) to **ACT** on God's offer—if they want to. The tricky thing is that a person can enjoy this working of the Spirit and look and act just like a born-again Christian, and still not be



one. He has partaken of all the PRE-SALVATION work of the Spirit and has not yielded himself to Christ all the way. He is one of those of whom Jesus said, "... they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away"

(Luke 8:12,13). This is **not** a saved man. Once a person is genuinely conceived in Christ, "NOTHING" can separate him from Jesus (Rom. 8:38,39). It's hard to think of a man going all through life, enjoying the work of the Spirit within him, and still not want Jesus. Such will be those who cry out in that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name, etc?" And Jesus will say, "Depart from Me, I NEVER knew you. . . !" (Matt. 7:22,23). It finally boils down to what is in the human heart, NOT the working of God.

We've covered an admittedly hard passage of Scripture. I have presented the view that offers the fewest problems for me. If you do not care for this view, you might consider the hypothetical view. That view would have the writer saying that while no one can really fall away from Christ, it would be impossible to renew him to repentance if he did. Keep in mind though, that both Scripture and human experience seem to suggest that it is possible for people to reach a state of heart and mind where they can no longer repent. A marginal note in the ARV and NASV offers another rendering, i. e., ". . . it is impossible to renew them unto repentance WHILE they again crucify to themselves the Son of God. . ." I'm convinced this is not what the author has in mind. To say that people can't come to Jesus while they are rejecting Him is a truism he would hardly bother to write. Besides, the illustration of the rain and the ground seems to militate against that view.

"The writer isn't going to give up on his readers, is he?"

9. Even though I have spoken to you like this, beloved friends, I don't for a minute believe that many of you are in this category. To the contrary, I'm satisfied

that most of you are bearing the kind of fruit that accompanies salvation. 10. The confidence I feel concerning you is based on two things: God's fairness and your good deeds. Out of love for His name you have ministered to the saints and are still ministering. God couldn't be so unjust as to forget that.



BELOVED. Our author has just delivered a frightening warning. Aware of the temptation facing his readers, he felt obliged to shock them with stinging words. But how will he follow up such a warning? He lets them know he loves them. For the first and only time in this book of warnings, he calls them "beloved." See how he almost hurries to let them know he doesn't believe any of them would turn his back on Jesus. To the contrary he is ready to assume they are all saved and showing forth real evidence of their salvation. Even so he felt it necessary to startle their minds with this warning. He wanted to shock them out of their mental lethargy so that he could take them into deeper truth. It's as though he were saying, "If I didn't love you so much, I wouldn't speak this way. He would rather scare them with words than have them run into sorrow by lingering with the basics and running the risk of backsliding. We should not take his words to mean that there were no apostates in the early church. Indeed there were. But in this particular group or fellowship, which he seemed to know intimately, he was ready to believe most were faithful.



CONFIDENCE. One might ask, "How can he be so confident that most of his readers are saved?" The answer: by what he sees in their lives. They are displaying the fruit of the Spirit by their love for God's people. This kind of love, he says, is proof of spiritual life, because it is the BY-PRODUCT of salvation. Mentioning salvation for the first time in this chapter, he says they have the kind of love that flows from it. Only a saved person can display this kind of love, and that fact makes it an evidence of salvation, i. e., "We know we

have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). But that's not the only basis for his confidence of their salvation. He is also confident that God will keep them safe. He puts it this way, "God could never forget what you have done in His name. He'd be unjust if He did." We should note that the kindness they have shown toward God's people, is the same as though it were done for God Himself. It would be completely against His character to forget it. Therefore the writer is confident God will give them the assurance they need and also "keep them from falling and present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!" (Jude 24).

11. My great longing, naturally, is that each of you will exhibit this wonderful fruit of the Spirit right to the very end, when you will receive the full realization of the great hope that is within you. 12. To do this, however, you must throw off your mental sluggishness and imitate the faith and patience of those who have gone before you. They believed God and held fast to their hope and now they have received what God promised. You will too if you follow their example.



KEEP ON. After speaking of his confidence in them, he urges his readers not to let up in their works of love. Why? Works are vital for maintaining assurance. When people are first saved a sort of honeymoon exists. In the first flush of salvation, believers can't do enough or say enough for Jesus. It is a terrific romance, not unlike the marriage relationship. To keep any marriage from becoming a dull affair, a person has to work at it. The same is true in Christ. Just as marital joy and excitement are kept alive by doing things for your partner, the thrills and assurance of the Christian life are kept aglow by serving Jesus. Thus our writer finds his readers need two things: (1) to shake off their mental sluggishness and move into the deeper truths of

God's Word (theory), and (2) keep on with their works of love (practical). They need the **Word** if they are to grow. They need the **works** to keep their assurance high. Ah, but will they do it? To challenge them further, the writer reminds them that they are not the first to travel this road. He is thinking of the great heroes of the O. T. whom they will meet in chapter Eleven. Those dear saints suffered trials and afflictions but refused to let them shake their confidence in God's promises. They trusted God and patiently accepted whatever He sent into their lives. As a result they inherited the promises. You can do the same, said the writer, if you will press on in the Word and work hard for Jesus. Do that and your future is as safe as the faithfulness of God.

"How about an example of someone receiving God's promise because of faithfulness?"

13. Take, for example, God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no greater than Himself by whom He could swear, God swore by Himself, 14. putting it in these words:

"I swear that I will bless you again and again, and I further swear that I will multiply your descendants over and over" (Gen. 22:16 ff.)

15. Whereupon Abraham patiently waited and finally obtained what God promised Him.



EXAMPLE. In choosing someone to use as an example of a person who trusted God in the face of trial and wasn't sorry, our writer selects Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. This O. T. saint was 90 years old when God told him he was going to have a son and out of that son He would build an entire nation. This seemed impossible for Abraham's body was as good as dead and his wife was barren (Rom. 4:19). Even so he believed God. After waiting 15 long years, the child was born to him. God's oath, however, was not given until

years later when God had commanded the old patriarch to take his son to Mt. Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice. Even though everything God had promised Abraham was to come through that one boy, the father of "all who believed" was ready to do it. God stayed his hand before the sacrificial knife could be plunged into the lad. When the boy was spared, Abraham received (in a sense) the promises. Immediately after this act of tremendous obedience, God spoke to Abraham confirming all the previous promises. This time He added something new—He backed it with an OATH. Certainly Abraham's trial was equal to anything facing the readers. So if he obtained the promise through his patient trust in God, they could too.

16. Now men, since they do have something greater than themselves by which they can swear, use the oath to confirm their statements. That puts an end to all argument. 17. In the same way, God, eager to assure the heirs of the promise that He never changes His intention or purpose, added His oath to the promise.



OATH. On TV we see presidents take the oath of office and court witnesses swear on the Bible. It is common practice for men to swear by something greater than themselves when they want to assure others they are telling the truth. In the same way, God wanted to give added assurance to Abraham that His promise would be fulfilled. But what would God swear by? Since there is nothing greater than Himself, all He could swear by was Himself. Of course it couldn't add to God's integrity in any way, but it did something for Abraham. It reinforced his faith. Ah, but was this oath for Abraham's sake alone? Indeed not. It was for ALL the "heirs of the promise," and that includes us as well as the readers of this letter. All of us have the benefit of this **double assurance**. For as Paul says, "If ye be Christ's, then ye are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). Very clearly God didn't have to give this

oath. His promise is good enough by itself. So it was a condescension on His part. Knowing it would help our faith, He says in effect, "I swear that My promise will hold true and everything will come to pass as I have said."

"How can we be certain the promise is for us as well as the patriarchs?"

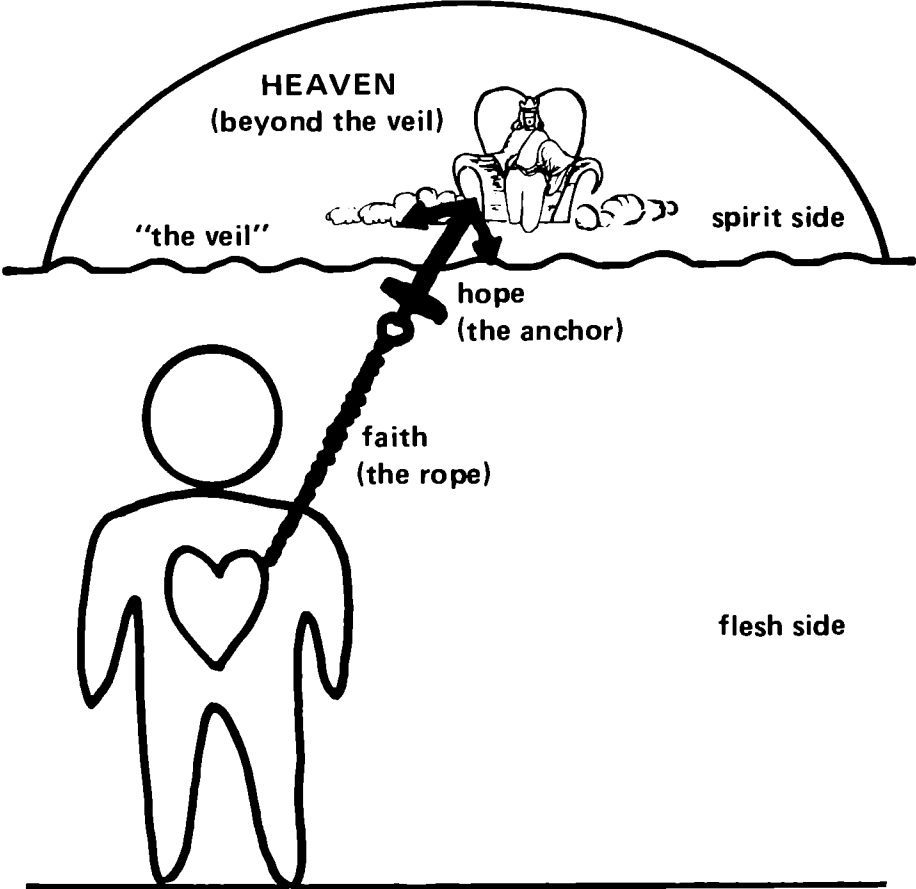
18. Because it is impossible for God to lie, we now have two things we can count on completely—His promise and His oath. Therefore we who have fled to Jesus for safety should be so full of encouragement that we eagerly seize the hope that is set before us. 19. That hope is the anchor of our souls. Solid and secure it is firmly lodged in the heavenly sanctuary beyond the veil, 20. where Jesus our forerunner has gone ahead of us to become a perpetual high priest in the line of Melchizedec.



ANCHOR. When the author says "WE" in the above verses, it clearly applies to ALL believers. Therefore all of us have the same double assurance that was given to Abraham. We can trust in God's promises on the basis of two unchangeable things: (1) His Word, because it is impossible for Him to lie, (2) and His oath. These two things should give us plenty of encouragement, says the author, when it comes to laying hold of our hope in Christ. His words, "fled to Jesus for safety," are sea talk. We are to think of ourselves as mariners caught in the evil storms of this world. Our ship is headed toward heaven where Jesus sits on the throne of God. Our hope in Jesus is our anchor. Normally in a storm, the anchor on a sailing ship is thrown over the side that it might become lodged in the unseen bed of the sea. That enables the ship to ride out the storm. But the anchor of our souls, our hope, rises upward. It passes through the veil into the most holy place of heaven and becomes lodged in the throne of God. Based on the promise of God, our hope is a spiritual anchor. Therefore it

can be lodged in the spiritual kingdom. God's Word and His oath assure us that our anchor can never be moved. It is solid and secure because it is impossible for God to lie or deceive us. Our hope is "locked in" to the unchangeable God Himself. We are as safe as God is true.

HOPE: THE ANCHOR OF OUR SOULS

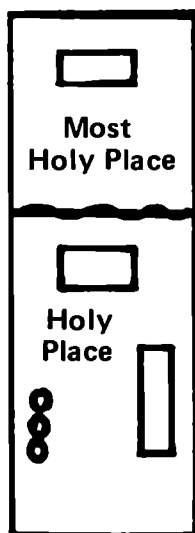


Observe that our faith and hope are two separate things. Our hope is a solid anchor for our souls. There is no "perhaps" or "maybe" about it. It is guaranteed by God's promise and backed by His oath. The line connecting us with our hope is our faith. See how our hope lies "beyond the veil." Though we live in the world of flesh, because of God's promises, we seize that hope by faith and CLING to it with all confidence. As life's storms rage, that anchor holds because it is lodged in the solid Rock, Christ Jesus. Therefore we needn't worry when persecutions or afflictions come against us. Our future is bright. A man can take anything when he knows better things lie ahead—and they do for those in Christ.

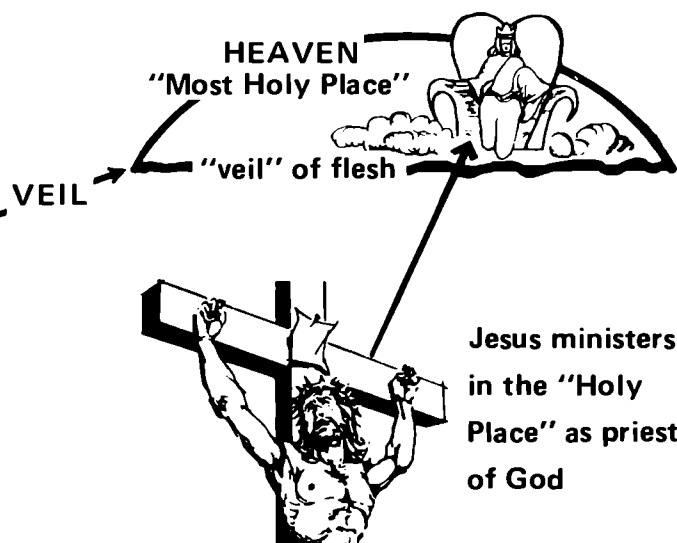


FORERUNNER. Not only is our hope (anchor) beyond the veil, but so is Jesus, "our forerunner," as the writer calls Him. We have just come upon a new word for Jesus, "prodromos." It is translated "forerunner," and is found only here. In Ch. 2, we saw Jesus as our "archegos," i. e., "pioneer." He was the first one to live the Christian life. As such He shows us HOW to

EARTHLY TABERNACLE



SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE



When the writer speaks of Jesus' entrance into the heavenly sanctuary beyond the veil, he introduces us to the central imagery of his letter. He has in mind the Day of Atonement as described in Lev. 16. Readers should be aware that this book is set against the tabernacle system of worship established in the wilderness, and also be familiar with the ceremony which took place in the tent. It is important to know how the high priest went once a year into the most holy place to make atonement for the sins of the people of Israel. The vital features were: (1) the sacrifice of the animals for the priest and the people; (2) the high priest's entrance, through the veil, into the most holy place with the blood of these animals. This drama pictured Jesus' work as our high priest. During His earthly ministry He sacrificed Himself for us. With His death on the cross He passed through the VEIL OF HIS FLESH into the presence of God, taking in effect, the blood of His sacrifice with Him. See how His earthly life corresponds to the holy place; His ascension, to passing through the veil, and now He ministers in God's presence (The most holy place) as a perpetual high priest.

live a God-pleasing life. But now we see Him as the One Who has gone ahead of us to make sure it is **safe** for us to follow Him into heaven. In military usage the word applied to the scout who accompanied an advance party. He went ahead to see if it was safe for the troops to follow. Since our “forerunner” is also our high priest, we acquire a new concept of Jesus, one quite different from the Jewish high priest. The Jewish priest went into the holy place of the earthly sanctuary once a year as a representative of the people. He did not go as a “prodromos,” for no one would dare follow him in there. In fact he got out as fast as he could. It was dangerous to linger in the presence of God. But it’s different with Jesus. He has gone in to the most holy place of heaven and **remains** there. Not only that, He is preparing the place for us that we might **follow** Him there. How different from Judaism. It is the work of our high priest to bring men into fellowship with God, not merely to represent them. Jesus has, in effect, thrown open the doors of heaven so that all who will, may enter into fellowship with God.

Our writer stopped at 5:10 to scold his readers for their immaturity. He wanted to move on to the deeper truth of Christ’s priesthood, but first he had to give his readers a spiritual spanking to shake them out of their mental sluggishness. So he broke off his discussion to warn them. Then he encouraged them by assuring them of his confidence in them and turning their eyes to their great hope in the heavens. That led him to Jesus as our forerunner and finally as our high priest. He has now returned to his main theme. The last verse of this chapter picks up where he left off in 5:10, i. e., that Jesus had become a perpetual high priest after the order of Melchizedec. He is now ready to discuss Melchizedec and show that his priesthood was superior to that of Aaron. The key idea is that of a perpetual priesthood, one which lasts forever.

7 1. Now just who was this Melchizedec? He was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. When Abraham was returning home from the slaughter of the desert kings, Melchizedec met him and blessed him. 2. The patriarch gave him a tithe of all the spoils of battle. Observe in the first place that the interpretation of his name means, "king of righteousness." However, since he was the King of Salem, he is also the "king of peace." 3. Now that is all that is said about him. There is no record of his having a father or mother, no ancestry of any kind, no date of birth or death. Standing then, as a perpetual priest, he is an ideal type of the Son of God.



MELCHIZEDEC. Our author is ready at last to plunge into the deep truth of Christ's priesthood. His basic text is Psa. 110:4, "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedec." He is going to expound that text fully, placing the emphasis on the word "forever." But who is this Melchizedec? Why does the author select him to show the superiority of Jesus? There are only three references to him in all the Bible. There's a brief account in Genesis 14; the single quote of Psa. 110:4; and his mention here in Hebrews. The Genesis account is brief. When Lot, Abraham's nephew, was captured by a coalition of desert kings, the patriarch summoned the armed men of his household and gave chase. Badly outnumbered, he put his trust in God and caught up with the kings and defeated them. Returning home from the campaign with his nephew, he passed by the city of Salem (usually identified with Jerusalem). Here he was met by the priest/king of that city. He gave the man a tenth of all the spoils whereupon this priest/king blessed him. What's significant is that God had a priesthood in operation at least 400 years before the Jewish priesthood was established with Aaron. This entire chapter will be devoted to showing the superior nature of this ORIGINAL priesthood. For if such a priesthood existed outside the family of Abraham, and long before Aaron was appointed,

then it is indeed superior to that of Aaron. Not only that, it is of a different order entirely.



TITHE/BLESSED. Since it is easier to show the superiority of Melchizedec to Abraham, than to show the connection between Jesus and Melchizedec, the author begins there. This superiority is clearly seen in that Melchizedec extracted tithes from Abraham. Trusting God as he did, Abraham would not pay tithes to just anyone. Very clearly he recognized this man as a true priest of God, even though he was a **Gentile**. Apparently, there were worshippers of the true God outside of Abrahams' family. It is also clear that tithing was a part of God's program long before the Law was given. Abraham did not do this because a law required it. He did it because of what he saw in this man. He knew he was God's priest. Then, after the tithe was received, this mysterious priest blessed Abraham. Further on, the author will observe that the lesser is always blessed by the greater, making it clear which of these two men is the greater. Beyond that, it will be argued by Jewish logic (our logic doesn't accept this kind of reasoning), that ALL of the Levitical priests were still in the loins of Abraham and thus **THEY TOO** paid tithes to this great man. If Melchizedec is worthy to receive tithes from Aaron and his successors (in Abraham), then he is clearly the greater priest.



PERPETUAL. To show the connection between Christ and Melchizedec, the writer makes two observations: first, the titles of this priest/king correspond to the titles of the Lord Jesus. The word "Melchizedec" actually means "king of righteousness." And since he was also the King of Salem (which means peace), he can also be called "king of peace." This is probably what led the author to connect Melchizedec with Jesus, for our Lord is the true King of Righteousness and the true King of Peace. Secondly, and by means of a strange argument, the writer seeks to prove the **perpetual nature** of Melchizedec's priesthood. He does it by observing that

nothing is written in Genesis concerning a father or mother for Melchizedec. The fact that there is no genealogy for this man in a book stressing the genealogies of its important men, is significant to the writer. He assumes: the Holy Spirit did this purposely to show that Melchizedec would appear as a type of Christ. It's an argument from silence. What the author sees in Melchizedec is this: the fact that he appears for a moment and then disappears, makes him like Jesus. The Lord came out of eternity into His incarnation—did His work in a short span of years—and then returned to eternity by His ascension. In His eternity, there is no beginning or ending for Jesus. Melchizedec, with no recorded father or mother, says the author, stands as a TYPE of the Son of God. Since Melchizedec has (in a sense) no beginning or ending either, his is a perpetual priesthood. This is why the key verse is: "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec." If the priesthood of Melchizedec is perpetual, then so is the priesthood of Jesus. That makes Jesus' priesthood superior to that of Aaron. You and I may not understand this kind of reasoning, but Jewish readers would.

"Just how does this make Melchizedec a superior priest?"

4. Let's consider for a moment how great this man had to be. When you realize that Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation gave him a tenth of all the choice spoils which he had taken from the desert kings, he had to be someone of surpassing greatness. 5. To appreciate his greatness, we observe first of all, that those Levites who become priests are commanded by the Mosaic Law to exact tithes from their fellow Jews, even though they too are descendants of Abraham. 6. Yet, here is a man outside the Jewish nation who comes along and exacts the tithe from the greatest Jew of all—Abraham! 7. And if that weren't enough, he turns around and blesses the very man to whom God gave the promises in the first place. 8. Now in the case of the Jewish priests, the tithe is

collected by men who die. But in the case of Melchizedec, Scripture tells us that he is a priest who lives on and on. 9. Therefore, if you will allow me, there is a sense in which one might say that Levi, who took the tithe from the Jewish people, also had the tithe taken from him through Abraham. 10. For he was still in the body of his great-grandfather Abraham when Melchizedec met him.



CONSIDER. Our author desires to do only one thing right now—prove the surpassing greatness of Melchizedec’s priesthood. To do this, he must dwell on the greatness of the man himself. It is rare to find Scripture featuring the greatness of any man, for there is only one truly great man, the Lord Jesus. However, because Melchizedec has been chosen as a TYPE of Christ, his greatness is extolled. Abraham saw the greatness of this priest and we’re asked to consider it too. The writer points out Melchizedec’s greatness by stressing the fact that he took the tithe from Abraham. The very mention of the “tithe” (or tenth), brings to mind the Levitical priests of Israel. They took the tithe from their fellow Jews. When the promised land was divided among the tribes of Israel, no territory was allotted to the tribe of Levi. The Levites were assigned to serve the tabernacle full time. They could do no farming. So God ordained that they should receive a tenth part (tithe) of all the produce of the other tribes (Numbers 18:20, 21). Now with the Levites also taking tithes from God’s people, the question was sure to be raised, “What’s so great about Melchizedec taking tithes when the Levitical priests do the same thing? How is he any greater than they?” Knowing this question would be in the minds of his readers, the author sets forth a series of contrasts which will prove the priesthood of Melchizedec is superior to that of the Levites.



TITHE. The basis of our writer’s argument is the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedec. He now uses it to show the superiority of Melchizedec’s priesthood in four different ways. (1) Under the Mosaic

Law, the Levites were given authority to exact tithes from their fellow Jews. Yet, this did not make them superior to them, because they all descended from the same man, Abraham. They had no authority to take tithes from people **outside** the nation, only the other 11 tribes. Yet here is Melchizedec, who is NOT a Jew, exacting tithes from no less a person than that of the founder of the Jewish nation. (2) His second contrast is that while the Levites derived their authority to receive tithes from the Mosaic Law, Melchizedec's authority did not rest on legal ground at all. His authority was his own greatness. He didn't need a law to justify his action. We can only assume then, that his priesthood was given to him by God directly. It was because Abraham recognized his superiority that he gave him the tithe. How great he must have been to exact tithes from the very man to whom the promises were given in the first place. (3) The Levite, as a mortal man, had the privilege of receiving tithes as long as he lived. When he died, that privilege passed to another. But this was not true of Melchizedec, if we agree that Scripture pictures him as one who does not die. While we must assume that Melchizedec did actually die, it is the **Scriptural** view of him that our author is using in his argument.



LEVI. Our writer's fourth argument is so strange, it deserves a light of its own. He admits it could be far-fetched. He is almost apologetic when he says, "... there's a sense in which one might say that Levi paid tithes through Abraham." His reasoning is this: When Abraham paid the tithe to Melchizedec, Levi was **potentially** in his loins. Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Levi. So Abraham was Levi's great-grandfather. In biblical thought, an ancestor is regarded as containing all of his descendants in him. This is NOT a biological argument, but a **theological** argument. When he says, "One might say . . .," he implies his words are not to be taken literally, but allegorically, which affirms the fact that this letter was written for Jewish readers. They are accustomed to this kind of thinking. We're not. No

matter how weird this reasoning sounds to us, the rabbis used it and the readers would accept it. The capstone of the argument is the fact that Melchizedec blessed Abraham. If only a superior can bestow a blessing on an inferior, then Abraham and the **Levitical priesthood in his loins** are BOTH inferior to this priest. The author now feels he has advanced sufficient argument to justify his use of Melchizedec as a TYPE of Christ. From the facts stated in Genesis, he has proved that Melchizedec has a priesthood from God which is eternal.

**“What need is there for another priesthood
besides the Levites?”**

11. If the Levitical priesthood—which constituted the very heart of the Law given to the Jewish people—had been able to bring them into a perfect relationship with God, what need would there have been for another kind of priest to rise from the line of Melchizedec instead of the line of Aaron? 12. For once you change the priesthood, you see, you also have to change the Law, for the Law defines the priesthood. 13. Very clearly the Messiah, the One referred to in the Psalm, didn’t belong to the tribe of Levi, the one specified in the Law. He is from another tribe, one from which no one ever served at the altar. 14. It’s a matter of record that our Lord was born of the tribe of Judah. Moses never once hinted that anyone from that tribe would serve as a priest.



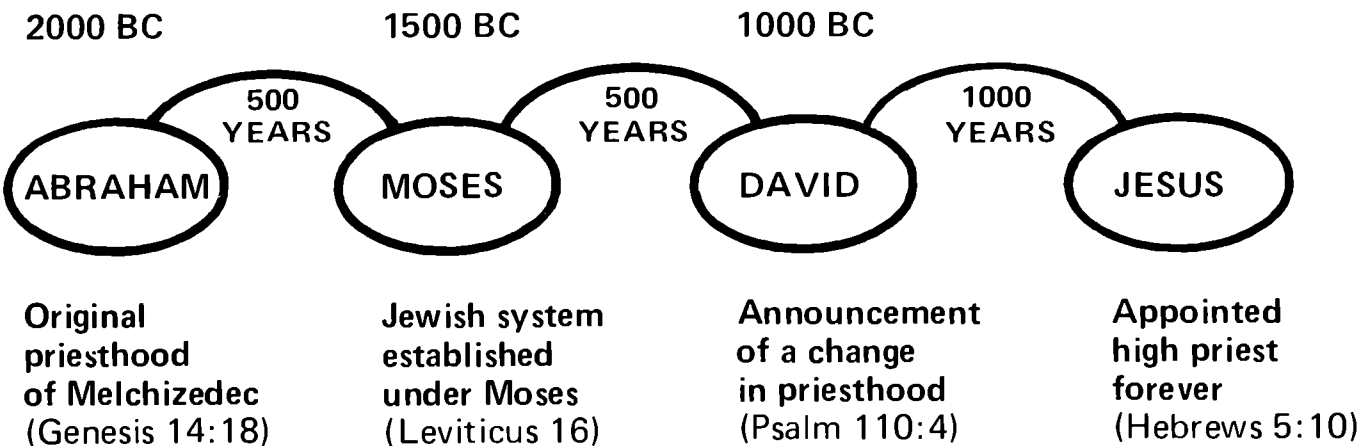
PERFECT. The whole point of the Jewish system was to establish a perfect relationship between God and His people and provide access into his presence. The Mosaic Law told the people what they had to do in order to enjoy such a relationship, but it demanded **perfect obedience**—which no one could give. Therefore the Law also provided for a priesthood and sacrificial system which was SUPPOSED to heal the breach when the people sinned. Thus the Law and the

priesthood went hand in hand. But the whole thing failed inasmuch as the sacrificial system was unable to cleanse a person's conscience so that he could approach God without fear of punishment. The Jewish system was a **physical thing**, i.e., it had to do with outward rituals, tabernacle furniture, animal sacrifices, etc. With sin a **spiritual matter**, there was no way for the Jewish priesthood to **remove** sins. Therefore, it could never be the true or final priesthood God had in mind for his people. At best it was a temporary device for showing man how sinful he was and how desperately he needed a sacrifice for his sin. This is why God announced through David that another priesthood was coming. He did this after the Law had been in operation for 500 years.



ANOTHER KIND. When God said that Messiah (Jesus) would be a priest of the order of Melchizedec, He was informing Israel that a complete change in the priesthood could be expected. This is why our writer makes so much of Psalm 110:4. That declaration indicates that the Jewish system was only temporary and would be done away with when Messiah comes. Not only that, but it would be replaced with one that was NOT Jewish at all. Melchizedec was NOT a Jew. Such a thing shakes up the entire Law. As the writer observes, you can't change the priesthood without changing the Law. Why? The priesthood was the very heart and soul of the Law. The Law clearly spelled out who could be a priest and what he was to do in the way of rituals and sacrifices to deal with sin. So when you come along with a different priesthood which changes all that, it means the Law is cancelled in favor of a new program. Since the Jewish system, with all of its rituals and sacrifices could not remove sin, it had to be replaced with another kind of priesthood—a spiritual one—one which **could remove sin**. Isn't it fascinating that our writer could prove to his readers from their own Scriptures that the Jewish priesthood was temporary and was due to be replaced by Messiah Himself, a totally different kind of priest?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PSALM 110:4



We observe the original priesthood of God in Melchizedec when he met Abraham about 2000 BC. 500 years later God gave Moses the Law with the Jewish priesthood at the heart of it. After the Law had been in operation about 500 years, God announced a change through David (Psalm 110:4). This meant the Law was temporary and would last only until Messiah arrived. Jesus came 1000 years after that announcement and was exalted as God's high priest forever! (Hebrews 5:10). With His appointment, the Jewish priesthood became obsolete and was cancelled. The Psalm was a clear prediction of the end of the Jewish Law.



TRIBE. That same Psalm offers another indication that the Jewish Law was in for a change. This is seen in the fact that the Messiah (the One Whom the Psalm said would be of the order of Melchizedec), was NOT from the tribe of Levi. The Scriptures clearly re-

vealed that Messiah would come from the tribe of JUDAH, through the line of David. This is a shattering thing as far as the Law is concerned. For it states precisely, that **only** those of Levi could serve in the priestly office. Thus the 110th Psalm announces the **DOOM** of the Jewish system. When our Lord Jesus arrived there was no question but what He was of the tribe of Judah. His genealogy (after the flesh) was a matter of record. Thus, when He was exalted as our high priest, the Jewish system was replaced by His spiritual priesthood. Please note that Jesus did **NOT** receive His priesthood under the Law, neither did he inherit it from Melchizedec. He was **APPOINTED** to it because of the sheer greatness of His Person. Melchizedec was appointed God's priest because of His greatness, and Abraham recognized it. That's why he is a suitable type of Christ. But Jesus is the **TRUE** high priest, because He is able to cleanse us of our sins and provide unhindered access into God's presence. Thus, the Law and its priesthood, while it gave the "knowledge of sin," served only to picture the final and true priesthood of the Lord Jesus.

"Wow!" That 110th Psalm is the key to understanding this chapter, isn't it?"

15. That the priesthood has been completely changed is clearer still when you consider that a different priest has arisen, One Who fulfills the type of Melchizedec; 16. One Who didn't become a priest on the basis of human descent as set forth in the Jewish code, but on the basis of the indestructible life within Him. 17. We are convinced of that because of what God said of Him:

"You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedec."

18. We see then that the old Levitical system has been cancelled because it was powerless and ineffective.

19. Like the Law of Moses, it couldn't bring anyone to God. But now we have a better hope, one through which we can draw close to God.



CHANGED. When God appoints someone to be the high priest of His people, and that Someone is **OUTSIDE** the established Jewish order, it is obvious He is **changing the entire program**. This is the truth that comes forth loud and clear from the 110th Psalm. The fact that a new priest is even necessary implies the inferiority of the old Jewish order. But the Messiah (Jesus) was not just another priest—He was a **DIFFERENT KIND** of priest. Just how different he was from the order of Aaron, is what our author wants us to see. (1) Jesus was a priest in the likeness of Melchizedec rather than Aaron, i.e., He did not come to His office because a Law put Him there. The Law of Moses required those in the line of Aaron to serve as priests whether they wanted to or not. Their personal fitness wasn't even considered. The mere fact that they descended from Levi made it mandatory. Jesus didn't inherit His job. He was **appointed** to it—the same as Melchizedec—because of the greatness of His Person. (2) Jesus' priesthood was based on the life that was in Him, not His physical descent from anyone. His was a life that could not be overcome by either sin or death. What's more, He had the power to transmit this life to those who believed in Him. Thus, He could do what no Jewish priest could ever do—give a life to people that neither sin nor death could overcome. And since His life is not limited by time, His priesthood continues forever.



JEWISH CODE. Our writer says that the Jewish legal system has been cancelled because it was powerless to bring men to God. At the same time he doesn't mean to belittle the Old Testament program. It was established by God and served a useful purpose, a glorious purpose in fact. True, it didn't provide a way to God but it did dramatize the fact that man is a sinner and needs God's mercy. All of those animals slain for over 1400 years surely did teach that the "wages of sin is

death.” That, in turn, paved the way for the gospel and the perfect sacrifice (Jesus) that was to come. The Old Testament program was a beautiful symbol of what God would do through Christ. We must not think though, that the Old Testament saints didn’t know God’s forgiveness or His presence. The Psalmist says they did (Psa. 32:1). David found it impossible to escape from God’s presence (Psa. 139:7). God’s presence has always been available to those who put their trust in Him. However they had to do so apart from the religious system of Israel, for the Jewish priesthood didn’t help anyone enjoy God’s presence. It did just the opposite. It caused people to stand at a distance from Him. The awesome ceremonies with only the high priest going into the most holy place, tended to make people fear the presence of God. It taught them that sin separates from God. Yet those who laid hold of the promises of God knew His presence in spite of the barrier the Jewish legal system created. Even so, that system demonstrated the fact that a “better hope” was needed and was coming.



BETTER HOPE. Mention of the word “hope,” reminds us of the closing words of the last chapter. There we were told that Jesus is “the hope that is set before us.” The Lord Jesus, with His priesthood, is that “better hope.” God never takes anything away from His people, but what He replaces it with something better; So when the 110th Psalm announced the doom of the Jewish priesthood, it also promised a better one at the same time. The better one is what we now have in Christ. That it is indeed better is clear when we consider that Jesus **actually does** for men what the old Jewish priesthood was supposed to do—bring men to God. By His death on the cross (the perfect sacrifice) the Lord atoned for ALL the sin of all of us (Isa. 53:6). But of course we still sin. Being saved does not make us sinless. We still sin, and when we do, we feel guilty. For sinners to be comfortable in the presence of a holy God, requires a constant cleansing of the conscience. That’s what Jesus does as our high priest. His blood removed all feelings of

guiltiness and the FEAR that goes with them. With our consciences continually washed by His blood we can rush into the arms of God without fear. This is what the people of the O.T. longed for, but never received under the Jewish priesthood. It is now available under the priesthood of Jesus, for His priesthood is the real thing.

‘What else do we find in the 110th Psalm concerning Jesus’ priesthood?’

20. This time when God established the priesthood He did it with an oath. 21. No oath was given when the Levites were installed as priests. But in Jesus’ case, the appointment was made with an oath when God said to Him:

**“God has sworn with an irrevocable oath,
‘You are a priest forever!’ ”**

22. Because of this oath, Jesus Himself is the living guarantee of a better covenant.

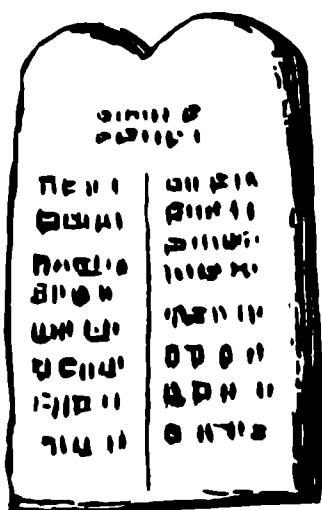


OATH. Please bear in mind that this entire chapter is an exposition of Psalm 110:4 and the author is developing as many points as he can on that verse to show the superiority of Jesus’ priesthood. He now draws out another remarkable fact—Jesus’ priesthood was confirmed with an oath. God had said to the Lord (through David), “You are a priest forever!” You’d think God’s Word would be good enough by itself. But in this case He backed His Word to the Messiah with an irrevocable oath. What is impressive about this is that the Jewish priesthood **had no such oath**. God never swore anything to Aaron or his sons. So on the surface of it, a priesthood with an oath is superior to one without an oath. But why does anyone use an oath? To guarantee what he says is true. But God’s Word is good without an oath, so why would He use an oath? Ah—to confirm something extraordinary and unique. In this case, God’s oath is given to confirm that Jesus’ priesthood will never

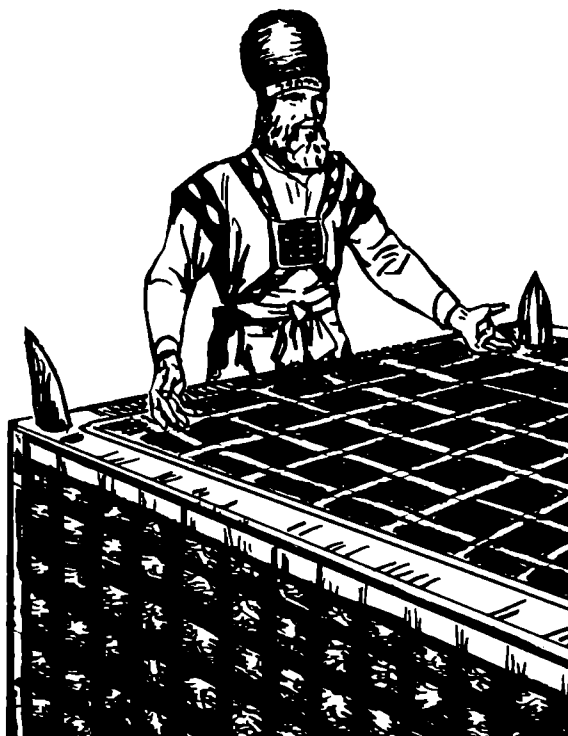
pass away, that it will remain forever! The emphasis is on the words, "priest forever!" Earlier we saw how God gave His oath to Abraham, that the patriarch might be assured that God never changes His purposes. So here it is given that WE (all believers) might be assured that Jesus' ministry as our high priest will never be changed.

MORAL VERSUS CEREMONIAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE OLD COVENANT

MORAL



CEREMONIAL



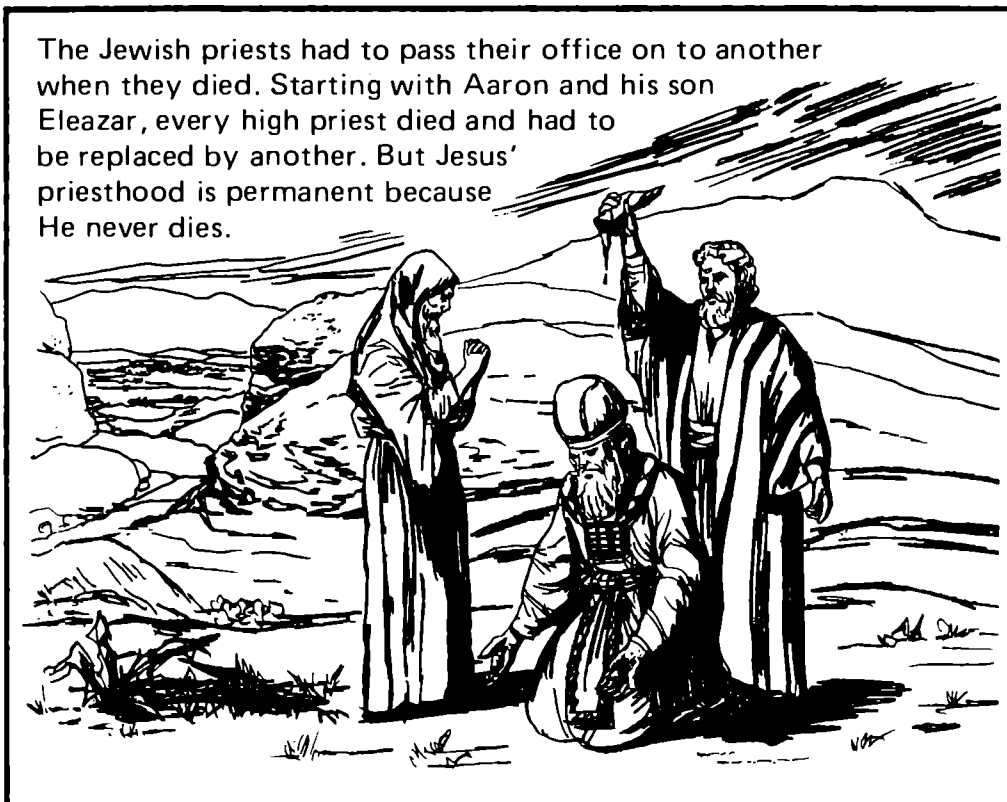
When we speak of the old covenant as being replaced by a better one, we do NOT mean that the MORAL requirements of the Law were set aside. That cannot be since they issue from God's own nature and represent the holiness NEEDED TO LIVE with God. It is the CEREMONIAL and LEGAL requirements that have been done away with. Jewish believers, raised under the Law, found it very hard to believe that compliance with the OUTWARD features of the Law were no longer necessary. In fact it is even hard for some Christians today to accept the idea that the LEGAL requirements, Sabbath-keeping for example, do not apply to those under the new covenant.



COVENANT. We now come to a new word, found for the first time in the book of Hebrews—"covenant." Since the idea of a covenant is going to occupy a major place in the rest of the letter, our author is introducing us to it now. Because God vows that Jesus' priesthood is changeless and permanent, it follows that the covenant associated with it must be superior to the one associated with the Jewish priesthood. What was the covenant associated with the Jewish priesthood? It was the LAW. Now a covenant is an agreement between two parties so that if one party does his part, the other will do his also. God had made a covenant with the nation of Israel based on the people's obedience to the Law. They would be His people and He would be their God as long as they obeyed His commands (Ex. 24:1-8). In other words, the relationship was based on obedience. But now through the gospel, God offers a new covenant between Himself and **individuals**. This new covenant is based on His love for us and Jesus' perfect sacrifice. Compliance with the Law is no longer the basis of fellowship with God. What a statement! Imagine how hard it must have been for those raised under the Law to accept such an idea. God knew it would be hard. That's why a guarantee goes with it. That guarantee is Jesus. He says, "As long as I am alive, I guarantee that God will accept you on the basis of your faith in Me, rather than any personal merit of good works under the Law!" But how can Jesus, as our high priest, be the guarantee of such a thing? Our author makes that clear next.

23. In the Levitical priesthood there had to be many priests. When death overtook one priest, another was needed to take his place. Thus, it required a succession of priests to keep the priesthood going. 24. But Jesus' priesthood can never be superseded. It is a perpetual priesthood because He lives forever. 25. This is why He is able to save completely and fully all who come to God through Him. Since He lives forever, He continuously makes intercession for His people.

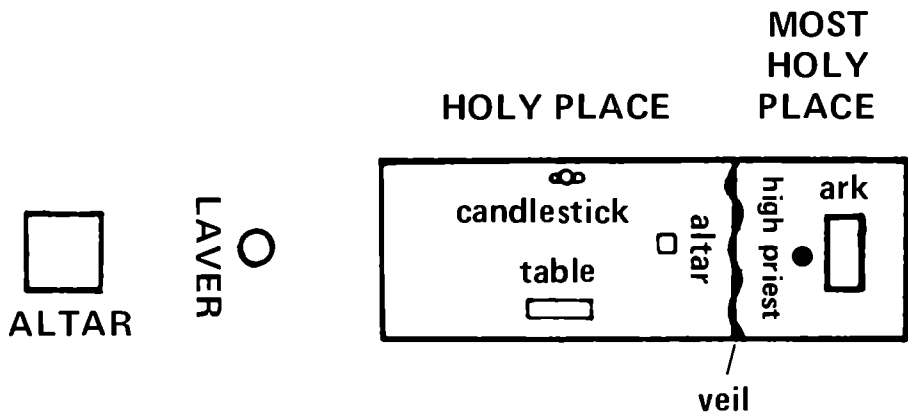
The Jewish priests had to pass their office on to another when they died. Starting with Aaron and his son Eleazar, every high priest died and had to be replaced by another. But Jesus' priesthood is permanent because He never dies.



INTERCESSION. The words, "priest forever," in the 110th Psalm, remind our writer that the Jewish priests had to pass their office on to another when they died. Every high priest died and had to be replaced by another. It took a succession of 83 priests, says Josephus (the Jewish historian) to keep the priesthood going from Aaron to destruction of the temple in 70 A. D. But Jesus' priesthood is permanent because He never dies. And God has sworn that it is a final and irrevocable priesthood which cannot be superseded or ended. He holds His office forever. In that office, says our writer, He makes intercession for His people. But we are not to think of Him as pleading with God to forgive our sins. Jesus had already prayed for us. We have His priestly prayer in John 17. He did that before He went to the cross. What's more, His sacrificial offering of Himself has already been made and accepted. This is why Jesus makes intercession for us by **BEING ALIVE** in the presence of God. The fact that He is alive means that His blood, already shed for our sins, is accepted by God on our behalf. As long as He lives—we live. Someone has

said that Jesus' presence in heaven is His prayer for us—and the answer. Therefore, as long as He lives, we can have fellowship with God. God swore that Jesus would be our high priest forever! Therefore those who put their trust in Him are saved—forever! This is full and complete salvation in all three tenses of the idea—justification, sanctification and glorification.

OUR LIVING
INTERCESSOR



Jewish Christians reading the words, "makes intercession," would immediately think of the high priest of Israel and how, on the day of atonement, he would go through the veil of the tabernacle into the most holy place. With him he would take the blood of the sacrifice which he would present to God as he begged Him to forgive the sins of the people. Along the bottom of his robe he wore bells which tinkled as he moved about in the room. As long as the people could hear the sound of those bells, they knew he was alive and that God was accepting the sacrifice. This drama pictures what Jesus is doing now in the most holy place of heaven. As long as our high priest (Jesus) is alive, God is accepting His sacrifice and forgiving all those who put their trust in Him as Savior. It is His **living presence** before God that guarantees our salvation under the new covenant. We live because He lives. This is why God's oath that He would be a **priest forever** is so vital to us.

"What is it that makes Jesus so perfect as our high priest?"

26. Jesus then, is precisely the kind of a high priest we need—a man who is completely holy, perfectly harmless and absolutely stainless. This puts Him in a class by Himself, utterly separate from sinners. Because He is so perfect, He has been exalted to the place of supreme power, above all the heavens. 27. In the spiritual sanctuary, He doesn't have to do as the Jewish priests did, offering daily sacrifices for their sins and the sins of the people. He put an end to that when He offered Himself on the cross as the one perfect sacrifice. 28. Because the Law was weak, it appointed weak and sinful men as high priests. But the oath, which came after the Law and superseded it, appoints God's own Son as our high priest and He can do the job perfectly and forever!



JESUS. Before moving on to discuss the Lord's priestly work in the spiritual sanctuary, our writer wants us to see how perfect Jesus is for the job as our high priest. What makes Him so right for the job is His **sinlessness**. The Jewish high priests were privileged to go into God's presence once a year by virtue of their office. That is, it went with the job. But with Jesus it is entirely different. He was able to enter into God's presence on the basis of His own holiness. Keeping before us the fact that Jesus IS A MAN, the writer describes His perfection with three words . . . "holy" . . . "harmless" . . . "stainless." He is **holy** because His character is pure in the sight of God. There is not a flaw in Him. He is spotless in terms of obedience and faithfulness and godliness. When it comes to His dealings with men, He is **harmless**. It is not in the Lord to harm a soul. There's not a speck of meanness in Him. When he says that Jesus is **stainless**, he is thinking of how the Lord was "tempted in all points like as we," yet there was no hint of impurity found in Him. As a man, He freely

associated with sinners and yet none of their evil rubbed off on Him. What a priceless quality for our high priest. The Jewish priests were “holy,” because they performed sacrifices to cleanse themselves. They were **ceremonially** clean only. But Jesus’ holiness issued from His own character, not from any rituals or rites. Therefore, as a **man**, He is in a class by Himself. None other is like Him. And it is on the basis of His stainless character that He now occupies the place of supreme power in the heavens (God’s kingdom).



SACRIFICES. The fact that Jesus did NOT have to offer daily or yearly sacrifices (as did the Jewish priests) is another proof of His perfection. The Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could offer anything for the sins of the people. Being sinless, the Lord didn’t have to offer anything for Himself. However, He did have to offer a sacrifice for His people. That’s what a priest does. But in His case, the sacrifice was—HIMSELF! Since He is perfect, His sacrifice was perfect also. And being a perfect sacrifice, it **never has to be repeated**. It was a once for all sacrifice, sufficient for ALL sins for ALL time. By His perfect life and death, Jesus put an end to all further sacrifices for sin. See how we’re being introduced to a new idea here—that Jesus is both the priest and the victim. No Levitical priest was ever asked to be both the offerer and the offering. How could He? He wasn’t perfect. Man’s sin requires a sinless priest. There is no way for God to accept the death of a sinner as a substitute for all sinners. Our writer, having done a terrific job in showing the perfection of the Lord, means to go on and show how He is also the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He will develop this idea in Chapter Nine. But as is his style, he introduces us to the idea here to prepare our minds for what is coming.



DO THE JOB. The difference between Jesus and those who served as priests under the Law is startling. Those priests were weak and frail men,

who were reminded of their sinfulness every time they made a trip to the altar. But no Law made Jesus our high priest, and neither did any sacrifice make Him fit. He was appointed to the office on the basis of His own perfection. But how could Jesus attain to such perfection **AS A MAN**? Ah—He was the Son of God. That is, He was born of God as well as the virgin Mary. From Mary He received the **human nature**; from God the divine nature. It was because He had a **human nature** that He could be **tempted** in all points like as we. It was because He had the **divine nature** that He could **resist** all evil and live a sinless life. Without **TWO** natures, He never could have qualified. The Jewish priests did not have two natures, therefore, they were not equipped as He was. Consequently, they couldn't do the job He did. And now, as a man, He had been exalted as our high priest, empowered to apply the benefits of His sacrifice to all who put their trust in Him. His perfect sacrifice brings perfect forgiveness. But that's not all. Since He is **stainless**, He can enter a sinner's heart and not be defiled in the process. He can dwell in your heart and mine and none of our evil rubs off on Him. Instead, His righteousness rubs off on us. No Jewish priest could do that for anyone. He had no righteousness to share with others. It is Jesus' stainlessness that makes Him so perfect for the job, precisely the kind of a high priest we need.

**"Agreed that Jesus is qualified for the priesthood,
what exactly is His work?"**

8 1. Here then is the chief point of what I am saying—we really have such a high priest as I have been describing, One Who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens. 2. He performs His ministry in the most holy place of heaven, the real tabernacle set up by God and not by man.



CHIEF POINT. Until now, our writer has been describing the priesthood of Melchizedec (it's Jesus' priesthood, too), showing how it was superior to the Jewish priesthood. He has also shown us how perfect Jesus is for the job. But now he means to shift our attention from Jesus' qualifications to what He actually does as our high priest. He will do this for the next 2½ chapters. At this point, he realizes some of the arguments drawn from the 110th Psalm have been pretty intellectual, perhaps over the heads of his readers. So he says to them—the thing to remember is that we **REALLY DO** have a high priest such as I have been describing. He not only exists, but He's doing His job right this minute. Then our author notes two remarkable things about Jesus' ministry. (1) He is doing it from a throne! He has taken His seat at the right hand of God's throne! (2) If that were not wild enough, he also says that Jesus is doing His work in the most holy place of heaven. These are things we must look into. How does a priest do His work from a throne, and what is the most holy place of heaven? Obviously we cannot understand the work of our high priest unless we understand these two ideas.



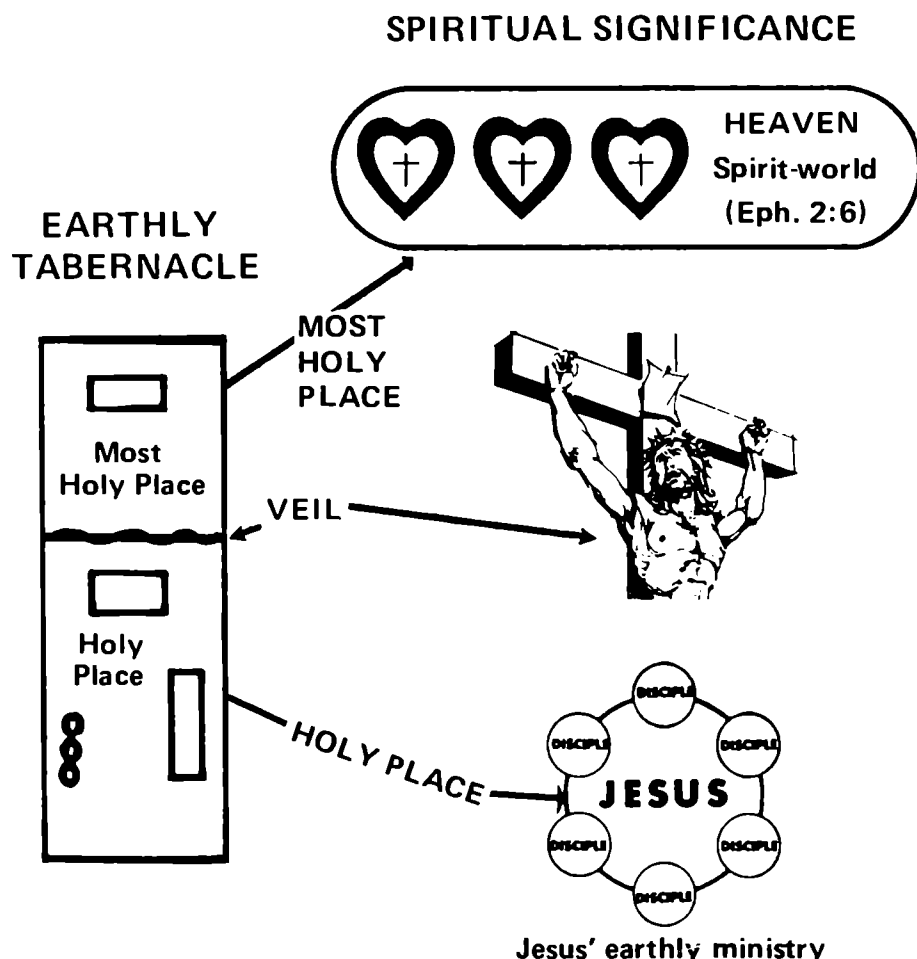
RIGHT HAND. When Jesus ascended into heaven and was exalted at the right hand of God, that was the finishing touch on His sacrifice. It was accepted. His exaltation fulfilled the prophetic words at the beginning of the 110th Psalm, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at My right hand. . . !" (Psa. 110:1). We shouldn't be surprised to see Him on a throne, for Melchizedec was **BOTH** a king and a priest. He was the type which Jesus fulfills. But what does it mean when it says that Jesus is seated at God's right hand? This is but another way of saying that Jesus has been raised to the highest rank of glory, a glory no less than the glory of God. As God it would be easy for Him to do this. But we must keep in mind He accomplished this **AS A MAN!** As a **MAN** He earned the glory which was His "before the world was" (John 17:5). As a man, Jesus is seated at

the “right hand” of God. But are we to picture Him as sitting down on an actual throne? No. No more than we should think of Joseph as sitting beside Pharaoh. The term “right hand” is an expression which means sharing the power and glory of God. Our writer wants us to see that our high priest operates with the authority of God. This means He has the power to do for us what a priest is supposed to do—bring us into fellowship with God.



REAL TABERNACLE. The second big truth our writer dropped has to do with **WHERE** Jesus ministers. The writer says, in “the most holy place of heaven!” But where is that? And what is the real sanctuary? We’re used to thinking of heaven as a **place**, but is it? No. On one occasion Jesus said, “the kingdom of heaven is within you” (Luke 17:21). That takes it out of the “place” realm. The truth is, God is **SPIRIT** (Jo. 4:24). As such He is omnipresent. That is, His presence is more like radio waves, unseen and unfelt. While individuals can tune Him in (receive Him) there is no way to compress Him into a place. Since God is spirit, so is His kingdom. You can no more mix **PLACE** and a spiritual **KINGDOM** than you can mix thoughts with sand—they are two separate realms. But our minds cannot grasp omnipresence, so the Bible uses a term we can understand—“heaven.” Thus we picture a place with a throne in it. But it is not like that at all. The whole spirit-world is heaven. And it is the Lord’s sanctuary. In that world, Jesus is **KING**. That world includes our souls, our thoughts, even our imaginations. That’s why we can close our eyes and meet Jesus in the “secret place.” The most holy place of heaven is **NOT** located in some remote spot of the universe, but in our hearts. It is **HERE** that Jesus, as our high priest, applies the blood of His sacrifice. He washes our conscience free of sin so that we can feel at home in God’s presence. His sacrifice **KEEPS ON** cleansing us from “all sin” (I John 1:9). When we yield our lives to Him, our hearts become the throne of God.

THE REAL TABERNACLE



The Jewish tabernacle pictured the WORK of the Lord Jesus. The holy place, where the priests could go, represented Jesus' work on earth WITH His disciples. The veil of the tabernacle through which only the high priest went, was Jesus' flesh broken on the cross (Heb. 10:10,20). The most holy place, into which the high priest alone entered, pictured Jesus' ministry in the spirit-world (heaven). The spot to which His blood is applied is our hearts. One day we will put off this flesh (as He did) and enter into the sanctuary with Him to reign with Him as KINGS and PRIESTS (Rev. 1:6). Familiarize yourself with this drawing as we will be referring to it again.

3. And since it is the function of every high priest to offer gifts and sacrifices on behalf of those they represent, so must our high priest have something to

offer. 4. Now if He were on earth, He could not be a priest, since there are already those who offer the gifts prescribed by the Law. 5. Those Jewish priests, however, work in a sanctuary that is only a shadow or symbol of the real thing in heaven. We're reminded of this when we consider how Moses, when he was about to build the tabernacle, was cautioned by God with this warning:

"See to it that you make everything precisely according to the pattern shown you in the mountain."



TO OFFER. A person was appointed high priest for one purpose—to make offerings to God on man's behalf. Since our Lord was appointed as our high priest, it was necessary that He too must have something to offer. In the last chapter we learned that the sacrifice He offered was HIMSELF. While the Jewish high priests made **continual** offerings, we must not think of Jesus as doing that. There's a world of difference between His offering and theirs. His offering was perfect. As such, it was a "once for all" sacrifice which eliminated the need for any further offerings for sin. The fact that He was "seated" at God's right hand is proof that His sacrifice was accepted and the atonement was completed **forever**. The Jewish priests **STAND** because their work was never finished. They were always trying to make atonement. But Jesus is **NOT** making any offerings now. That part of His work is **DONE**. His work now is that of applying the **benefits** of His one perfect sacrifice to our hearts. Having mentioned that Jesus did have an offering, our author immediately drops the subject. He won't take it up again until Chapter Nine. There he will deal with it at length. Something has crossed his mind and he wants to take that up with his readers before discussing Jesus' offering of Himself any further.



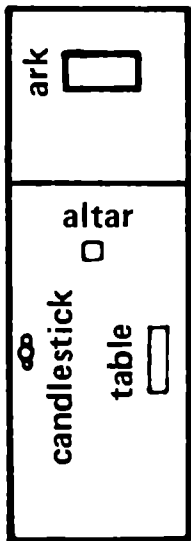
LAYMAN. If Jesus were on earth, He couldn't serve as our high priest. That's the idea our author wants to develop at the moment. The earthly priesthood was limited **by Law** to one family—that of Aaron. Jesus didn't even come from the same tribe, let alone that particular family. So if He were on earth, He would be a layman, with no qualifications for the earthly priesthood. But what would be the point? Jesus wouldn't want to get involved in animal sacrifices. They cannot remove man's sin. The truth is, it would be terrible if Jesus were on earth now. What we need is a high priest Who operates in the heavenly sanctuary, One Who can **literally** apply the benefits of a perfect sacrifice to our hearts. Because His ministry is in the spirit (and not on earth) Jesus is able to wash our hearts free of sin. It is His purging of our consciences that makes us feel at home in the presence of a holy God. The author's statement that the earthly priests were still functioning can be taken as evidence that Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The temple program was apparently going full blast when this letter was written.



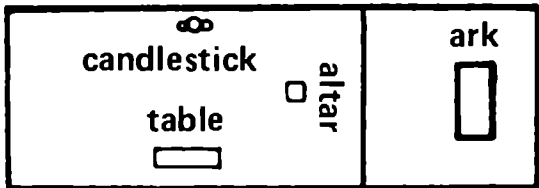
PATTERN. Our writer is trying to convince his readers how much better off they are with the earthly program replaced by a heavenly one. It wasn't easy for them to believe an **unseen priesthood** was better than the Jewish priesthood which had been going for 1400 years. This is why he draws attention to the instructions Moses received on Mt. Sinai. The old lawgiver was shown the layout of the tabernacle and the form of worship he was to set up for Israel. His instructions were very precise, right down to the last detail. Yet he knew that what he was about to build was **NOT** the real thing; that it was just a shadow or symbol of a heavenly reality. The Jewish program with its tabernacle furnishings and rituals pictured a spiritual priesthood, and Moses seemingly knew this. He also knew this was why God wanted His instructions followed to the letter. But what he **DIDN'T** know was the exact nature of the high priestly work to take place in the heavenly sanc-

WHAT MOSES DID NOT SEE
IN THE MOUNTAIN

HE SAW THIS
EARTHLY
TABERNACLE



HE DID NOT SEE
A HEAVENLY TABERNACLE



Speculation has arisen over the pattern shown Moses at Sinai. Some, pressing the tabernacle concept with extreme literalism, claim Moses was shown an original tabernacle in heaven. And that what he set up on earth was a true copy of a literal tabernacle supposed to exist in the spirit world. But we know "God is spirit," therefore His sanctuary is spirit also. Consequently there can be no heavenly "forms" (per Plato) for Moses to copy. "Places and things," simply do not exist in the spirit-world; they belong to this world only. Scripture itself indicates that Moses was instructed in such detail concerning the tabernacle that every bit of its design was given to the lawmaker. He didn't copy it from anything (Ex. 25:40, 26:30, Num. 8:4). God designed it, making sure it pictured the work of His Son.

tuary. He couldn't for example, know that the holy place pictured Jesus' earthly ministry and that the candlestick pictured Him as the "light of the world." Neither could he know that Jesus would offer Himself as the

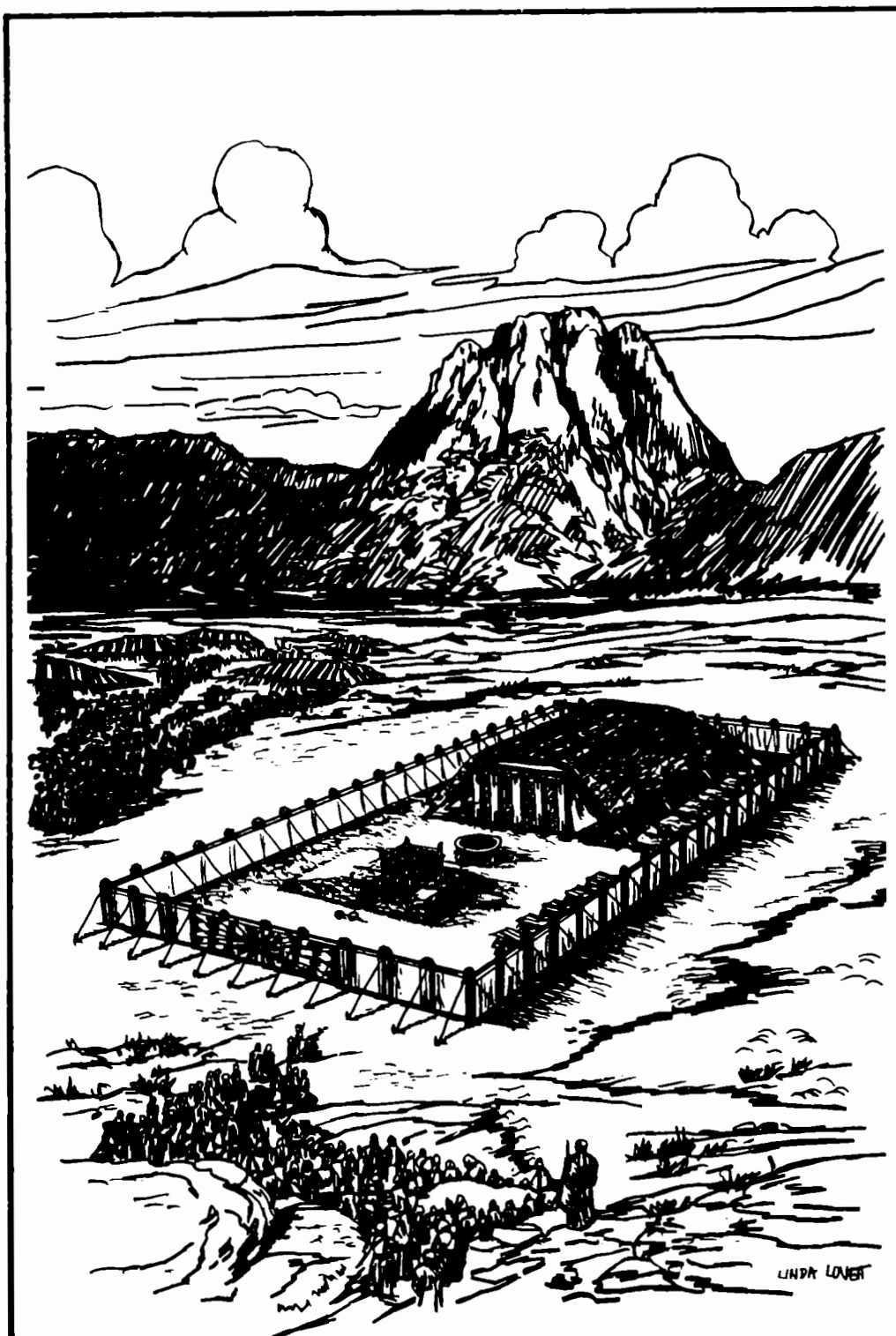
“bread of life” as pictured by the showbread. Beyond him was the fact that the VEIL separated Messiah’s earthly ministry (holy place) from His heavenly ministry (the most holy place of heaven). Even so, he understood that the earthly program somehow symbolized a heavenly priesthood greater than the one he was setting up for the Jews. That is what the author wants his readers to understand. The heavenly reality is obviously superior to its earthly shadow.

“What about that new covenant which goes with Jesus’ ministry?”

6. Therefore the ministry of our high priest is vastly superior to that of the earthly priests, even as the covenant which He mediates between God and man is also superior, because it rests on superior promises.



COVENANT. Inasmuch as Jesus performs His ministry in the spirit, and the Jewish priests function on earth, there is no comparison between their ministries. At best, the earthly priesthood and program can only be symbols and shadows of the real thing. Yet Jesus’ ministry is superior for still another reason—He mediates (and has brought into effect) a superior covenant. At the end of the last chapter our writer introduces us to the word “covenant.” He told us that Jesus was the “guarantee” of a better covenant. That’s as far as he went with the idea. Now he is ready to devote two chapters to a fuller explanation of it. We saw, in the last chapter how a covenant is an agreement between two parties. In business, the two parties bargain for the best deal and then sign an agreement or covenant, vowing to carry out their end of the deal. But it isn’t like this with God’s covenants. God comes to man with a deal and there is no bargaining. Man has nothing to say about the deal. He must take it or leave it. In O.T. times God approached Israel through Moses. He offered to take the Israelites and make them His own personal



The covenant which God made with Israel through Moses was an honest legitimate deal. He offered to take the Israelites and make them His own personal nation if they would obey His laws. This drawing shows the tabernacle, with Mount Sinai in the background.

nation if they would obey His laws. God's part was to protect the nation and multiply the people. Their part was to obey. The Israelites listened. The deal sounded good, so they accepted it. God's covenant with the Jews was based on OBEDIENCE. The program having to do with that covenant is known as JUDAISM. The Law included the priesthood and sacrificial system.



SUPERIOR. The covenant which God made with Israel through Moses was an honest, legitimate deal. God was ready to bring the nation unto Himself in a special relationship and protect her against her enemies. He even promised to heal her people of their diseases. It had numerous material benefits. In speaking of the Law, the covenant under which the Jewish people enjoyed these benefits, the apostle Paul said it was "holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). The truth is, it was perfect. But that is what created the problem. It was a perfect Law given to **imperfect people**. Had the people been sinless it would have been an ideal arrangement. Had they been faithful, it would have been great. But Israel was unfaithful. She turned to other gods. She broke God's Law right and left. Since it was based on obedience, the covenant was broken soon after it was made. Now the new covenant, of which Jesus is the mediator, is completely different. It is NOT based on our obedience at all, but our faith in Jesus' perfect obedience. This new covenant, made available to man through Jesus, is far superior to the old one. It is based on better promises. What those promises are, our writer will tell us shortly. What is unique about the new covenant is that it is offered to INDIVIDUALS. "Whosoever will" may put his trust in Christ and come under the new covenant. The program initiated by this new covenant is called CHRISTIANITY.

7. It's obvious that the first covenant was a failure, for if it had been able to do the job, what need would there have been for another one? 8. God in effect

admits the failure of the first covenant when He finds fault with His people:

"The days are coming," says the Lord, **"when I will put into effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah."**



FAILURE. One might ask, how can the Law, which Scripture says is holy and good, possibly be a failure? The answer is simple. As good as it was, it wasn't what man needed. It couldn't give him the help he needed. Since man is a sinner, he needs help with his sin, not a law that tells him how bad he is. A city can enact perfect traffic laws, but they won't make good drivers out of people. All those laws can do is show up their failures and punish them when they break them. Since man is a sinner, all any HOLY law can do is make him look bad. Therefore, the covenant of the Law failed because man is a sinner. This is the weakness of the Law. As Paul says, the Law was "weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). For the Law to do the job that was needed, it would have to **enable** the people to keep their covenant with God. Every time a prophet arose to rebuke the people for their sinfulness, he was at the same time revealing the Law's failure. Or as our writer puts it, every time it was necessary for God to find fault with His people, He was in effect also finding fault with the Law. The failure of course, was due to man's sinfulness, not any defect in the Law itself.



ANOTHER ONE. In support of his claim that the Law was a failure, the writer turns to a famous passage in Jeremiah. Jeremiah prophesied prior to the fall of Judah (587 B.C.) The northern kingdom had been taken captive by the Assyrians 150 years earlier. The prophet cries out that the nation has forsaken God and turned to the false deities of the Canaanites. The covenant was broken. God would now let them go into exile for 70 years. But even as Jeremiah speaks of the coming exile, he holds out the hope of a new covenant.

The days are coming, he says, when God will make a new covenant with His people. The new covenant would be a far better deal than the one offered to Israel. The new deal would be offered through Christ, and very different from the one offered through Moses. This one would offer complete forgiveness for man's sins and provide him with the power to live a godly life. This is the New Testament, (the same Greek word as covenant) which offers salvation by grace through the shed blood of Jesus. This is what man has needed all along. Note that it is GOD, not man, Who realizes the failure of the Old Covenant. Even though Israel tenaciously clung to the Law of Moses, it was God Who set it aside.

9. "And it won't be like the covenant that I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt. They didn't keep their part in My covenant, so I abandoned them, says the Lord."



BY THE HAND. With tender language God makes reference to that first covenant which He made with the children of Israel. They had cried to Him out of their suffering in Egypt and He heard their cry. He sent Moses to deliver them. The deliverer took them through the Red Sea and brought them before God at Mt. Sinai. There God offered them His deal. If they would obey His laws, He'd make them the greatest nation in the world. As long as they kept their part of the agreement, they would enjoy His full protection. But if they broke the covenant, the deal was off. As we have seen, Israel didn't want to be a "peculiar treasure" unto the Lord. She wanted to be like her pagan neighbors. Generation after generation sinned against God. He repeatedly sent His prophets to call her back. But Israel was stubborn. She would not listen to the prophets or give up the false gods she had embraced. Then God raised up other great prophets such as Jeremiah to accuse Israel of breaking her agreement and warn her of

the consequences. The deal was off. God was no longer obliged to protect her. He would let her fall prey to her enemies.

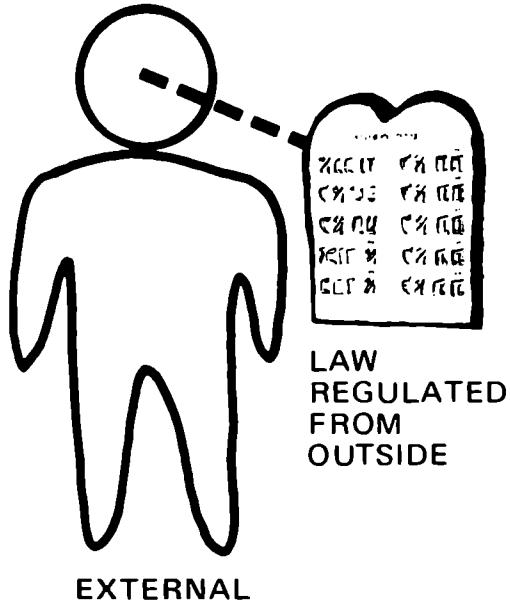
10. "This new covenant which I am going to establish with the house of Israel will be like this: after those days, says the Lord, 'I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they shall be My people.' 11. In that day it will no longer be necessary for anyone to teach another what is truth, or say to his neighbor, 'Know the Lord,' because they shall all know Me, small and great alike. 12. For I will forgive their sins and remember their evil ways no more."



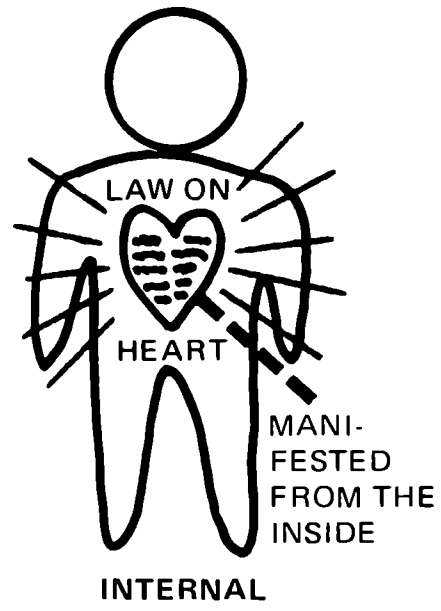
AFTER THOSE DAYS. It should be obvious by now that God's covenant with Israel was NOT a permanent one. It simply did not work. It was powerless to bring men into fellowship with God and that, after all, was His purpose in making man in the first place. So the Law-method is out. Those who cling to the old Jewish code, do so in error. Very clearly a new covenant was ushered in to replace the old one. This new covenant was God's idea. Just as He announced the **new priesthood** through David (Psa. 110:4), so did He announce the **new covenant** through Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34). God would never have made such an announcement if the old covenant had any hope of doing the job. The new covenant would not become effective, however, until Jesus arrived some 600 years later to seal it with His own blood. As Moses sealed the old agreement with blood, so was the new one to be sealed with the blood of Jesus. Of course, the new covenant would have to be different than the old one. It had to be one that took into account that sinners cannot make themselves righteous, neither can they measure up to a perfect standard. Because of this, the new covenant is based on different and better promises. When we see what they are, we also see why the new covenant succeeds where the old one could not.

THE REMARKABLE DIFFERENCE IN THE COVENANTS

OLD COVENANT



NEW COVENANT



The drawing shows sinful man trying to live up to a holy, **external** code, with **NOTHING** inside him to help him. Such a program can only fail. Under the new covenant, God's laws are written on the believer's heart. It is now a matter of outliving what is already inside him. For a person to live a holy life, he must have a holy nature. Therefore, the new covenant also provides for believers to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Equipped with a godly nature, the believer is able to live a holy life.



LIKE THIS. There are three exciting features (promises) associated with the new covenant which God was to establish in the place of the old one.

(1) Under the new covenant, God would **NOT** write His laws on stone tablets but on the hearts of His people. This way the believer would have a **DESIRE** to obey. Instead of trying to conform to a set of external rules that were contrary to his spirit, a man could outlive something which was already inside him and a part of him. He would obey God because he **WANTED** to, not because he **HAD** to. (2) The second feature of the covenant had to do with the way a person was able to know the truth of God. Under the old covenant, men and women had to accept the teachings of the priests as the

truth of God, with no way to discern for themselves. Under the new covenant it would no longer be necessary to go to others to determine God's truth. A man would be able to recognize the truth himself, since he would have the Spirit of Truth within him. Also under the new covenant, every person would be DRAWN to the Lord. He may not heed the call to "know God," that echoes inside him, but it is there. Jesus said He would "DRAW ALL MEN" unto Himself (Jo. 12:32). (3) The third promise of the new covenant offers total forgiveness for all sins. Because of Christ's perfect sacrifice, the believer's record of sins is erased forever. No such thing was possible under the old covenant. Whereas sin separated people from God in the old agreement, sin CANNOT separate a believer from God in the new deal (Rom. 8:38,39). There are consequences for sin, but NO separation from God. That is a fantastic promise, one superior to anything offered under the old covenant.

13. Now when God said He was going to put a new covenant into effect, the old one became out of date that moment. Having been made obsolete, the old covenant is decaying and is about ready to disappear.



OBSOLETE. When new model cars are announced, the current models simultaneously become obsolete. From then on they are headed for antiquity. Well, that's what happened to the Law (the old covenant). And that's what our writer wants his readers to grasp. He wants them convinced that the Law-method has been superseded by the grace-method, and that they should forget the old one. While the new covenant had to wait 600 years before it could be established, it was finally ushered in. When the sacrifice of Jesus put it into effect, the old system was set aside by God. With it went the earthly sanctuary, the Jewish priesthood and the sacrificial system. All that was discarded by God except, of course, the moral Law which continues into eternity. The Jews, since they did not accept Jesus, continued to cling to the old covenant after the new one had become

operative. But God took care of that too. A few years after this letter was written, the Roman general Titus leveled the city of Jerusalem. The site on which the temple once stood is now occupied by a Moslem mosque. There is no altar in Israel today, no sacrifice, no blood. The old way has vanished. When Jesus died on the cross, the era of the Law and the prophets ended abruptly. The age of God's Son was ushered in. The new covenant and priesthood are now in operation. Those Christians who are today praying for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple, have failed to realize that God is utterly through with that program. A little thought and they would cease giving financially to a rebuilt temple that is clearly going to be used by – antichrist! (John 5:43).

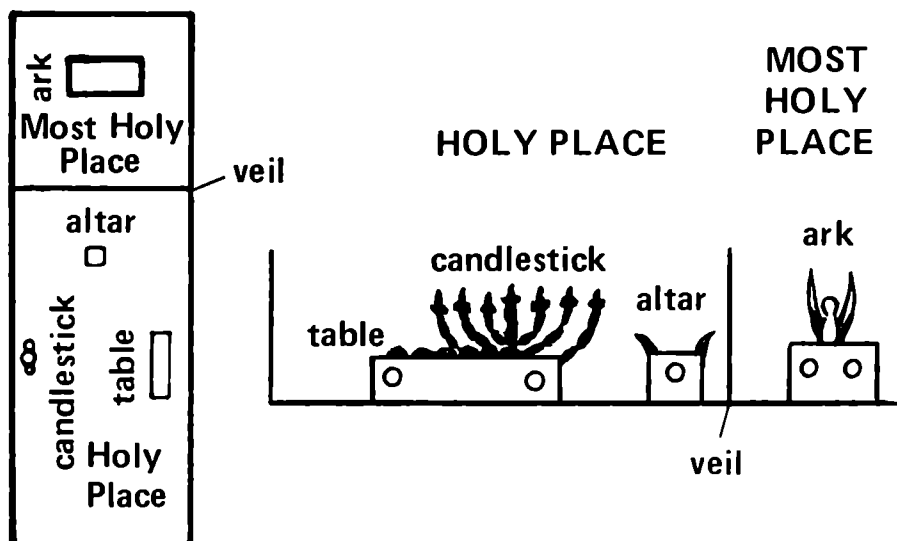
“What is there about the Jewish system that demonstrates its inadequacy?”

9 1. Now then, that first covenant which God made with Israel had prescribed rules of worship and a sacred tent which served as the earthly sanctuary or place of worship. 2. This tent had two parts. In the first compartment were the lampstand, the table with the loaves of bread set out before God. It was called the holy place. 3. Then behind the second curtain was another compartment called the most holy place. 4. In that room, which was approached by means of the golden altar of incense, was the ark of the covenant. This was a wooden chest covered with gold. Inside the chest were a golden jar containing a sample of the manna, Aaron's wooden staff that budded and the stone tablets on which were written the words of the Law. 5. On top of the chest were the cherubim, angel-like figures whose wings spread out over the lid of the ark. That lid was called the mercy seat. There is more that could be said about these things, but I don't want to go into any great detail right now.

SEE THE TABERNACLE AND ITS COMPARTMENTS

TOP VIEW

SIDE VIEW



Note the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place. No one but the high priest was allowed to pass through that veil into the presence of God. Even he was forbidden to enter the room except on the Day of Atonement, and then not without the blood of the sacrifice. Try to fix in your mind the location of the various pieces of furniture as they are discussed below.



SACRED TENT. Our author has already shown the Jewish system of sacrifice and worship to be a "symbol and shadow" of the real thing. He said further that it was obsolete and ready to pass from the scene. Now he is ready to move into a discussion of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. But before he does, he pauses to point out the inadequacy of the old system in still another way. This time he wants to show how the **tabernacle itself** proves the inferiority of the old covenant and its priesthood. By means of a simple description of

the tabernacle program our writer will prove that Judaism failed to do what religion is supposed to do—provide man with access to God. He won't have to go into any great detail to do this, because his readers, Jewish Christians, were already familiar with it. When we understand the arrangement of the tabernacle and how it was used, the weakness of the system becomes obvious. Now the tabernacle itself was a large tent. It was divided into two rooms. The first room was called the holy place. The second room, the most holy place. The two rooms were separated by a heavy veil. Neither room had any windows. The holy place was illuminated by a candelabrum holding seven lamps. The most holy place was illuminated by the glory of God.



HOLY PLACE. Observe how the author describes each room of the tabernacle by its furniture. As a person entered the first room, the holy place, the lampstand would be on his left. It was made of pure gold and had 7 lamps on it. It was on the South side of the tent. Because the tabernacle was made of several layers of skins and the doorways were covered by heavy curtains, the room would have been very dark apart from the lamps. So they served a practical purpose as well as symbolizing the fact that God (Christ) was the "Light of the world," and that the Jewish nation was supposed to be a "light unto the Gentiles" (Acts 13:47). Across from the candelabrum, on the North side of the holy place, was the table of showbread. It held 12 loaves of bread which were replaced every Sabbath by the priests. There seems to be some confusion as to the location of the altar of incense, since it is mentioned in connection with the most holy place. But most scholars feel it was in the holy place, just in front of the veil. It is hard to see how it could be maintained with hot coals if it were in the most holy place, for no one was allowed in that room except on the day of atonement. Besides the priests used this altar in connection with the morning and evening sacrifice.



MOST HOLY PLACE. When it comes to the second room or the most holy place, we're concerned with only one piece of furniture—"the ark of the covenant." This was the most sacred item in early Israel. It was a box or chest about four feet long and two and one-half feet high. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The lid on this box was a thick slab of solid gold called the "mercy seat." It represented the throne of God. Over the mercy seat were two angel-like figures made of gold. These were the cherubim. Their wings were stretched out over the mercy seat. Their eyes were focused on it, as if studying God's presence on the mercy seat. The ark or box contained three objects in early times: (1) the golden jar of manna (Ex. 16:32-34); (2) Aaron's rod (or cane) which blossomed and produced ripe almonds (Num. 17:8-9); (3) the two stone tablets on which were written the words of the Law (Ex. 25:16). While the author mentions these things, he is not really concerned with such details. His primary interest is in the two divisions of the tabernacle and the fact that only the priests were allowed to enter it. What he wants us to see is that no one but priests could go into the tabernacle at all, and only the high priest into God's presence. Thus the tabernacle demonstrates the **exclusion** of God's people from His presence. And since it was so central to the old covenant, it is proof of its failure.

6. Under this arrangement, here's how things went generally: the priests would go in and out of the first room as often as necessary in the performance of their duties, 7. but only the high priest could go into the second room. Once each year he would go in all by himself, but never without the sacrificial blood which he offered for the sins that he and his people committed unknowingly.



ARRANGEMENT. The system of worship which God prescribed for Israel required the priests to go into the holy place on a daily basis. The high priest went into the most holy place once a year. Every

evening the priests would light the lamps on the candelabrum and every morning they would return to trim them. At the time of the evening and morning sacrifice, they would also burn incense on the altar of incense. The incense represented the prayers of the people. Thus the priests, were in effect, doing their worshipping for them. That in itself is an obvious weakness. The work of the high priest was different. He went into the most Holy place but once a year, on the day of atonement. This was his big day, the day for which he existed. Following an elaborate ritual, he made several trips into the most holy place, each time with blood. The first time he took the blood of a bullock, which had been slain for his sins. He sprinkled that blood on the mercy seat. Then he came out and got the blood of a goat that had been slain for the sins of the people. He took that blood behind the veil and did the same thing with it. Then he appeared to the awaiting crowd to announce that their sins for the past year had been atoned for. He spent as little time as possible in the most holy place, knowing the people would be terrified if he delayed. The point to see in this discussion is that the system was clearly designed to keep the **people AWAY** from God's presence, rather than bring them to Him. The old covenant was, in effect, a "no trespassing" sign above the entrance to God's presence.

8. Now here is what the Holy Spirit teaches us from this arrangement: as long as the tabernacle enjoyed its exclusive status, the way into the holiest of all, the true sanctuary, was barred to everyone. 9. Therefore the Jewish system symbolized the inaccessibility of God—and does so even to this day. Consequently, all those sacrifices and offerings cannot give a man the perfect conscience he needs, 10. since no one can achieve inner perfection by conforming to outward regulations that have to do with food and drink and ceremonial washings. Such a program may be good for one's body, but it can't do anything for his conscience.

Even so, God was pleased to use it until Christ should come and put the new covenant into effect.

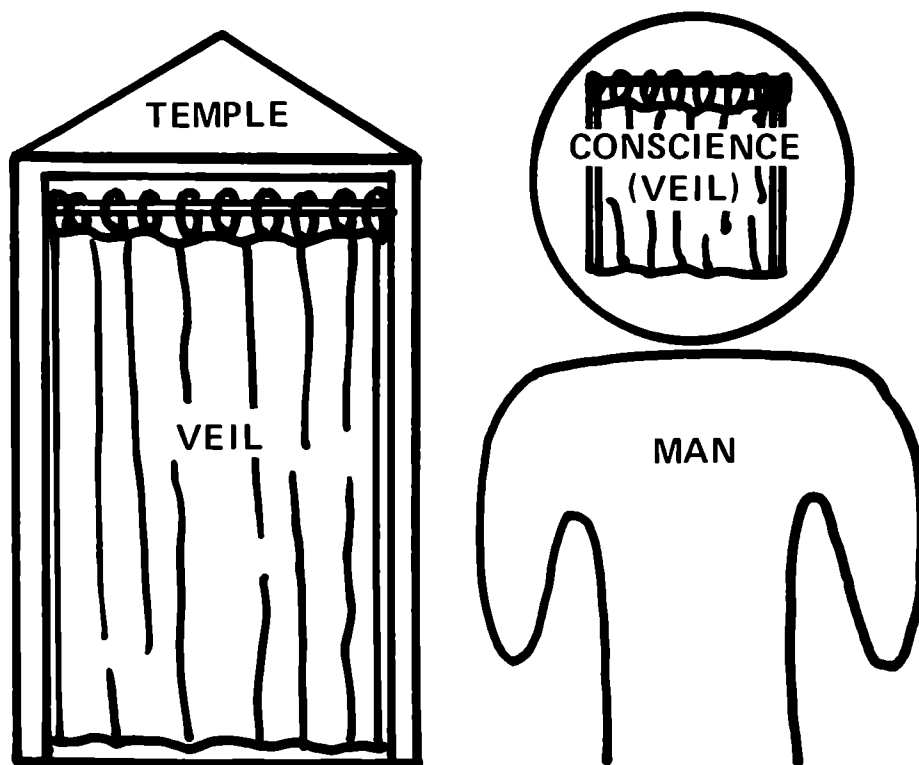


BARRED. Our writer says that the Holy Spirit Himself teaches us that the tabernacle program actually barred people from God's presence. He ought to know, He is the One Who gave the priesthood and tabernacle system to Moses in the first place. The writer feels the Spirit's witness on this point is so strong that there can be no argument about it. So what again is the symbolism of the tabernacle? Just this: throughout the period of the old covenant, the Mosaic dispensation, God's people were barred from direct access to Him. No one could go into His presence **FREELY**. The tabernacle itself was in the way, and more particularly the **VEIL**. The veil was the "no trespassing" sign. It was an outward, physical symbol which said that the **way** to God was closed. The ritual of Judaism was like traveling on a highway and coming to a sign which said, "road closed." Now this veil was not in the wilderness tabernacle only. It was also in Solomon's temple and Herod's temple, which was standing when this letter was written. Thus the writer could point to it and observe for readers how it stood as a powerful symbol of the inaccessibility of God. Inasmuch as only the priests, who represented the people, could go into the tabernacle—and they were barred from the room of God's presence—the tabernacle arrangement did indeed indicate that the **WAY** to God was closed to everyone. The only reason the high priest could go in there annually, was because his work pictured the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Jesus, Himself, is the **ONLY WAY** to God (John 14:6). As long as the temple (with its veil) existed, it stood as a symbol of barred access to God under the old covenant.



CONSCIENCE. The mention of the word "conscience" in vs. 9, reminds us that man is responsible for his deeds and must one day give an account of himself to God. It is the function of the conscience to warn everyone that man has to answer for his sins

MAN'S CONSCIENCE—THE REAL VEIL



From what was said above, we see that the real barrier to God is man's own conscience. The tabernacle veil may have **physically** barred the priests from God's room on earth, but man's conscience keeps him out of the true sanctuary. Aware of his sin, a sinner will not go through that veil to meet a God Whom he knows punishes sin. His guilty conscience forces him to stay on this side and find ways to justify himself in his own eyes. A sinner doesn't want to get anywhere near God's presence. He is uncomfortable enough around those who represent Him. Until a man's conscience is washed, the last person he wants to meet is God.

and must one day stand before a God Who hates sin and punishes sinners. The slaying of bulls and goats doesn't silence the voice of the conscience. A million animal sacrifices cannot erase the inner conviction of sin. The entire Jewish program consisted of **outward** observances only. The outward and physical acts gave a man **ceremonial cleansing**, but not the **inner cleansing** he needed. There is no way for a man to feel peaceful in the pre-

sence of God until he knows he's clean on the inside. Thus, we see that the REAL barrier to God is a man's own conscience. The tabernacle system was powerless to help man at that point. Once we realize this, we see why our writer is so eager to discuss the new covenant based on Jesus' perfect sacrifice for our sins. Under the new covenant, the believer's conscience is washed clean of all guilt. He can go into the "true sanctuary" (God's presence) without any hesitation. Why? He has no fear. With his conscience cleansed by the blood of Jesus, he can approach God without an iota of fear. He can come boldly without the question of sin rising in his mind to accuse him. No animal sacrifice can do that . . . only the blood of Christ.



REGULATIONS. God's arrangement with Israel provided for other things besides the priesthood and tabernacle system of worship. There were also regulations concerning food and drink as well as various ceremonial washings. While these did much to protect the nation's health, they were also connected with the sacrifices and ceremonies. That made them religious ordinances. When outward duties become part of religious ritual, people tend to put their trust in them. Forgetting they are merely symbols of a spiritual reality, they start thinking of them as spiritual resources. The writer considers these regulations as simply part of the drama that Israel was acting out before the eyes of the world. They too were scheduled to vanish along with all the rest of the ceremonial paraphernalia when Jesus arrived to usher in the new covenant. The whole system was to go—the temple programs, the sacrifices, the rules and regulations, customs—everything. And why not? Being physical, they could do nothing for a man's spirit or conscience. Yet, there are those today who would resurrect these Jewish customs, teaching that "holy water" and "water baptism" do indeed cleanse the conscience in some way. Even Christian baptism, which testifies to the fact that one's conscience has **already been washed** clean by the blood of Jesus, is a symbol and not

the reality. As futile as these customs were for spiritual cleansing, God was pleased to use them until Jesus provided true cleansing under the new covenant.

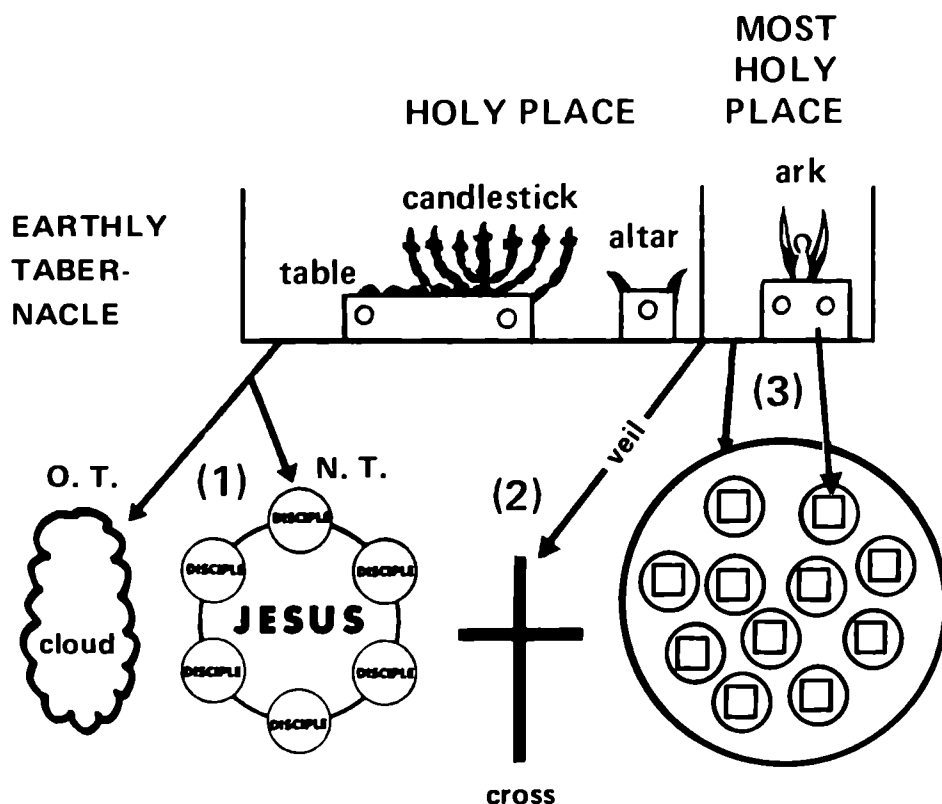
“What about Christ’s offering in the heavenly sanctuary?”

11. Meanwhile, Christ has come and taken His place as our high priest and is presently ministering the good things that were to come. The sanctuary in which He does His work is far greater and more perfect than the Jewish tabernacle, for it was not made with hands, that is to say, it is in no way a part of this physical world.



MEANWHILE. Having shown how the Jewish system barred the way to God, our writer is ready to show how Jesus brings men to God. We have reached the heart of Hebrews. The author begins by saying that Jesus has taken His place as our high priest and is already ministering the good things of the new covenant. That which was pictured in the Jewish system has now arrived. The first thing our writer notes is that our high priest has gone into the heavenly sanctuary. The emphasis is on the word “heavenly.” Knowing it will be hard for his readers to make the shift from the earthly tabernacle to the heavenly, he says that the heavenly tabernacle is “not made with hands.” That is, it is not constructed of anything material. It is spiritual and invisible. It is not like anything in this world. Why does he stress this? Because the Jewish tabernacle was symbolical only, merely a **TYPE** of the true tabernacle. And men tend to take **TYPES** and impose them on the real thing. They actually build doctrines on the types. For example some picture Jesus as seated on a throne in heaven, sprinkling His literal blood on some kind of a mercy seat in heaven. It is very hard for people to shift from the symbol (type) to the real thing. Our writer knows this. Therefore he deals with that problem by stressing the fact that Jesus is now operating in the spiritual realm only. How can there be anything material about a minis-

JESUS' MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE



See again the Jewish tabernacle with its two divisions which represent Jesus' earthly and heavenly ministries. (1) The holy place pictures His physical dwelling among his people. In O.T. times He used the form of a cloud, the shekinah glory which the people of Israel beheld as He led them in the wilderness. Then, in the gospel period, He shifted to a body to dwell among men in a different form. In this body, He went to the cross. (2) There He passed through the veil of His flesh (physical death) and entered the spiritual realm. The veil in the tabernacle pictures His flesh. (3) Once He is on the other side of that veil, His work is wholly spiritual (2 Cor. 5:16). The large circle represents God's spiritual kingdom. Our souls are in that kingdom NOW. The little boxes inside the small circles picture our consciences. Sin and a guilty conscience are spiritual matters. They must be dealt with in the spirit. That is why Jesus went through the veil, so that He could minister to them. He applies the benefits of His cross (the blood) to our consciences by a spiritual process.

try to the **Image of God**? God is spirit, therefore, His image is spirit also (John 4:24). The soul of man is spirit. His conscience is spirit. His imagination, where he

sins and where he meets with the Lord (the secret place) is also spirit. Since the conscience of a man is washed by the blood of Jesus, there has to be a spiritual meaning to His blood. You cannot apply literal blood to the conscience of a man. So neither the Lord nor His blood should be thought of as physical while He ministers in the heavenly sanctuary.

12. Now He went into the heavenly sanctuary but one time and hasn't come out since. It was not the blood of the goats and bulls that made His entrance possible, He entered through His own blood. His shed blood secured for us an eternal deliverance from guilt.



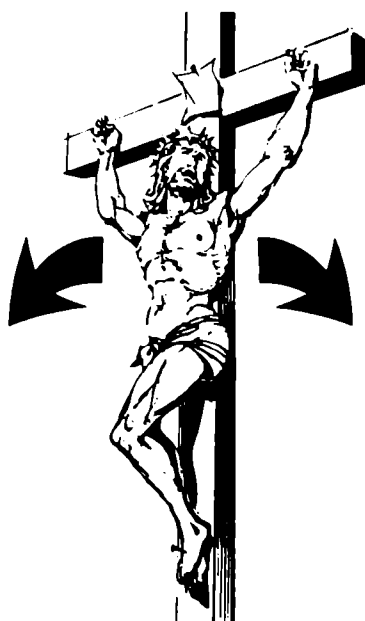
THROUGH. When it comes to the blood of Christ we are obliged to distinguish between the earthly side of the cross and the spiritual side. Very clearly our Lord made a transition from flesh to spirit at Calvary. The verse before us speaks of the WAY Jesus entered the most holy place of heaven—THROUGH His own blood. The shedding of His blood was His "passport" into the spiritual sanctuary. It gave Him the RIGHT to enter. The Jewish priest TOOK animal blood with him when he entered the holy of holies in the earthly tabernacle. He carried it through the veil. That blood gave Him the right to enter. He didn't dare go in without it. But we must not carry this type over to Jesus exactly as it was performed in the Jewish ritual. Why? First of all, our high priest **was the sacrifice**. The Jewish high priest didn't die for sins. Jesus offered **Himself** as the sacrifice for our sins. Thus, He was both the offering and the offerer. No matter how closely one studies the Jewish ritual, he won't find that in the type. Then notice how our writer says that Jesus went THROUGH His own blood. He was careful NOT to say that Jesus TOOK His own blood. There is no way for **physical** blood to be carried into a **spiritual** sanctuary. Nothing physical can enter the spirit realm. That's why the whole body is left behind when a man dies. "That which is born of the

flesh is flesh," said Jesus, "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). When Jesus entered the spiritual sanctuary He left everything physical behind Him, including His blood. So when the word speaks of our consciences being washed with that precious blood, how are we to understand it? Ah, the term "blood of Christ," must have another meaning.

JESUS' BLOOD ON BOTH SIDES OF CALVARY

EARTHLY SIDE

physical
blood shed
death for sin
righteousness
produced



HEAVENLY SIDE

spiritual
blood applied
life unto God
righteousness
applied

The drawing above seeks to picture Jesus' blood on both sides of the cross. On the earthly side, our reference to His blood is PHYSICAL. When we speak of His blood after Calvary it is SPIRITUAL. The shedding of Jesus' **physical** blood refers to His death on the cross. It was by MEANS of His blood that He entered the heavenly sanctuary. This was pictured by the Jewish high priest as he went through the tabernacle veil with animal blood. Once Jesus' blood was shed, (physical death) He was released from the body. Thus, it was THROUGH His blood that He made the transition from flesh to spirit. Once He passes through the veil (His flesh) He cannot take anything physical with Him. He can only take those things which belong to His PERSON. He can take His holy nature, i.e., His obedient life, and personal righteousness, for these things are spiritual. When we receive Him into our hearts, they become ours. They become a part of us. When they do, we say his blood has been **applied** to us.



SHED BLOOD. When our Lord Jesus cried from the cross, "It is finished!" there was nothing more He had to do to **EARN** our salvation. There was nothing more God needed in order to be able to forgive sinners and grant them eternal life. True, it still had to be imparted to those who would receive it by faith, but the atonement itself was complete. He did **NOT** have to present **HIS** blood in heaven before His work was accepted, as some have suggested. His resurrection and exaltation to heaven were God's seal on His work; **PROOF** that Calvary was perfect and complete. What then did He take into heaven? **HIMSELF!** That's all. He went in His own personal righteousness—a righteousness He had **EARNED** as a **man!** It was Jesus Himself, you see, Who was acceptable to God. He lived a life of perfect obedience, and He died in perfect obedience. We can also say that He took with Him His perfect life, His perfect nature. Ah, but these are spiritual, aren't they? These He **CAN** take into the heavenly sanctuary. While He could **NOT** take His physical blood, He could take His righteousness. That is the other meaning for the term . . . "blood of Christ." Therefore we see that the blood of Christ means one thing on the earthly side of the cross and something else on the heavenly side of the cross.



ETERNAL DELIVERANCE. When we discuss the animal sacrifices of the O.T. we tend to dwell on only half the truth they picture, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The other half is pictured in the catching of the blood and sprinkling it on the altar. Remember what God said to Moses . . . "the life of the flesh is in the blood; I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood, by reason of the life, that makes atonement" (Lev. 17:11 NASV)? In the Jewish ritual, the **LIFE** of the animal was figuratively transferred by the sprinkling of the blood. This dramatized the truth . . . "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The drama of the high priest was pictured in the transfer of Christ's life to us. When we receive Jesus (via the Holy Spirit)

His life becomes our life. We then have a life that is holy and acceptable to God. The Spirit witnesses to our hearts that our sins are GONE! When the Holy Spirit seals to our hearts the truth that the GUILT of our sins has been removed we can then say we have been "washed in the blood of the Lamb." As long as Christ lives, we have this perfect cleansing and holiness before God. Since He has been exalted as a "priest FOREVER" our deliverance from the guilt of sin is eternal.

13. Under the old system, the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer were sprinkled on those who were ceremonially defiled. This took away their ritual impurity.

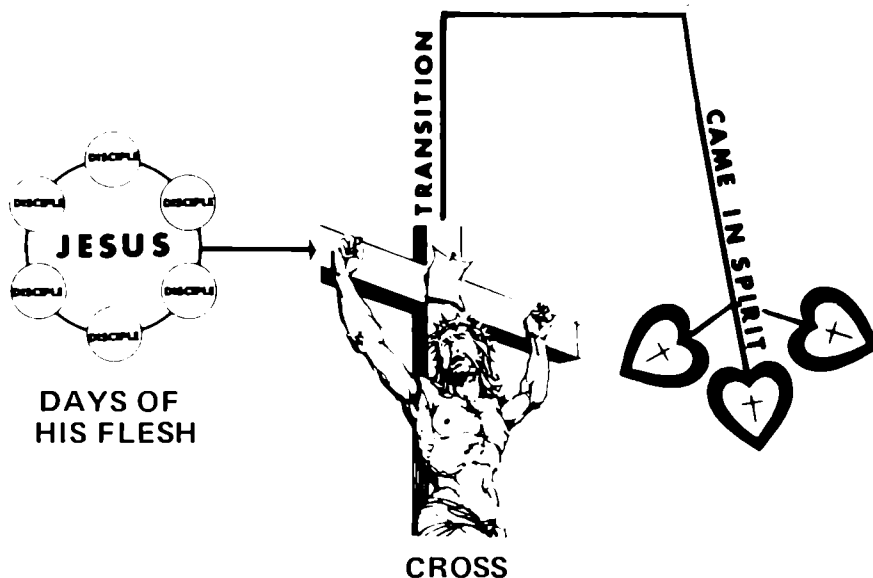


IMPURITY. Our author is thinking of what was accomplished by the blood of animal sacrifices in the O.T. times. There was a certain cleansing obtained from it, but of course, it was outward and ceremonial. When a man sinned, he was excluded from the congregation of the Lord. He was actually barred from worshipping the Lord. Until the proper sacrifice was made, he could not rejoin the congregation. But once that sacrifice was made, he was considered cleansed and was restored to fellowship with God's people. The writer gives us two examples of cleansing for sin and defilement under the Jewish system: (1) the "blood of bulls and goats," referring to the annual ceremony on the Day of Atonement; (2) and the "ashes of a heifer," which were used to remove any defilement contracted through touching or approaching a dead body. There were many other sacrifices, but these two represented the whole range of cleansing by animal sacrifice. Yet, every bit of it was OUTWARD. It was all ceremonial. It couldn't do anything for a man's conscience. There is no way for physical blood to remove **spiritual** defilement. So what is the author's point? Just this: if animal blood could remove outward defilement and restore a person to fellowship with the **people** of God, what must the blood of Christ be able to do? Ah, that precious blood has the

power to remove the guilt of sin and bring men into fellowship with **God Himself**.

14. If animal blood could do that, think what the blood of Christ does for us! Through His eternal spirit He offered Himself to God as a spotless, perfect sacrifice. Consequently, His blood has the power to cleanse our consciences and release us from dead works to serve the Living God.

JESUS' OFFERING OF HIMSELF IN THE SPIRIT



In the days of His flesh, the Lord Jesus lived a righteous life, His SOUL was obedient unto death. That obedience took Him to Calvary. All of our sins were laid on His soul while He was in His body on the cross. He suffered the penalty for our sins when He cried out . . . "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" That was the atonement for our sins. He was still alive when He cried out, "It is finished!" Then, via His blood, He made the transition from flesh to spirit. On the day of Pentecost, He made Himself available to men through the Holy Spirit. When we put our trust in Him, we receive that same victorious Spirit which was obedient unto death.



ETERNAL SPIRIT. We have already seen how Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary **THROUGH** His blood. In this verse, the author wants us to see how Jesus offered **HIMSELF through His eternal spirit**. Many translations make it appear that Jesus made the offering through **THE HOLY SPIRIT**. We can't disagree with that. Everything Jesus did, He did through the Holy Spirit. There was no way for Him, **AS A MAN**, to please God in His own strength. "Of Myself," He said, "I can do nothing." But that's not the point. If we limit the author to saying that Jesus offered Himself in the Spirit's power, we miss a bigger truth. The writer is contrasting the fleshly offerings of the Jewish priests with the spiritual offering of Jesus. The animal sacrifices were physical and outward, His was spiritual and unseen. The shedding of Jesus' physical blood made possible His transition from the physical world into the spiritual sanctuary. But His physical blood **DID NOT** atone for our sins. Sin is a spiritual matter. The wages of sin is eternal separation from God. When God laid "on Him the iniquity of us all," was it on Jesus' body or His soul? Sin cannot be laid on a body because sin is spiritual and the body physical. It was the sinless **SOUL** of Christ that was the real sacrifice at Calvary, **NOT** his body. He offered **HIMSELF** to God. He was **IN** a body at the time, but it was Jesus Himself Who bore our sins **in** that body. This is why the offering is so priceless.



DEAD WORKS. The name "Living God" was used in O.T. times to contrast the God of Israel with the dead idols of the heathen. The true God is alive. When we come to Him through Jesus, we find a living Person waiting for us; One eager for us to become intimate with Him and enjoy Him. Before we were saved, our best works were defiled by the fact that we were dead in trespasses and sins. No matter how great our sacrifices, none was pleasing to God. Our **works** were dead, because **we** were dead. But once our consciences are cleansed by the blood of Christ (saved), the character of

our works changes. They are then pleasing to God. Thus it is clear that we are cleansed for fellowship and service. In O.T. times only the priests were sprinkled with blood. Therefore, only they could enter the sanctuary and serve the Lord. All others had to wait outside and watch. But now that our hearts have been **sprinkled with His blood**, we can go into the heavenly sanctuary. Via our imagination we can enjoy the Lord and serve Him. The blood of Jesus makes it possible for us to do ALL of our works in the presence of the Lord. We can work with Him in the completing of His church; we can play with Him, or we can relax in His presence and enjoy Him.

"How do the O.T. saints benefit from Jesus' death?"

5. Because Jesus' blood has such power, He is the mediator of a new covenant between God and man. The new agreement provides that all who are called by God will receive the promised eternal inheritance. Why? Because His death atoned for the sins of all men, including those who lived under the old Jewish covenant.



MEDIATOR. Because Jesus' death was such a perfect sacrifice for sins, says our writer, He is the Mediator of a new covenant. That is, God is now able to offer a brand new deal to men. With the blood of Christ able to wash people from their sins, they can draw nigh to a holy God. On the basis of Jesus' death, God can do what He couldn't do before—bring men to Himself. So, whereas the Jewish covenant kept people away from God, the new covenant brings men to God. But there's more to it than that. When Moses descended from Mt. Sinai, with God's first proposition (the old covenant), he said to the people, "If you'll do this, then God will do this." There were **conditions** imposed on the people. If they didn't keep those conditions the covenant was broken and the deal was off. The people didn't keep the covenant. No sooner was the compact made than they broke it. Inasmuch as their

animal sacrifices could not cleanse their consciences, there was no way for them to inherit the promises God had made to them. Jesus, on the other hand, since His blood **does** cleanse, can bring men to God and qualify them to receive God's promises. There are no conditions anyone has to keep under the new covenant. They have **already been kept** for us by Christ. So Jesus is a very different Mediator than Moses. It was Moses task to see that the people learned the conditions and kept them. It is Jesus' task to see that all who put their trust in Him **RECEIVE** the benefits He secured for them. When a man comes under the new covenant, the rights and benefits are guaranteed by the Lord Himself. He has **FULFILLED** all the conditions of the covenant Himself. Under the old covenant, the **people** had to meet the conditions—and couldn't.



INCLUDING. At this point one might ask, "What about the O. T. saints who believed the promises of God, yet died in their sins? How does Jesus' death benefit them?" Our writer says that Jesus' death **was retroactive**. Even though they died long before He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, their guilt is wiped out by Jesus' blood. But this benefit applies only to those "called" by God, i.e., the true believers. So then the new covenant offers total forgiveness to the believer of ANY age. How is that possible? Ah, remember Jesus death was **spiritual**. The "wages of sin" is spiritual death. Having suffered that death for us, it is not limited by time. In a way I do not understand, He suffered for us outside of time where the past and the future are compressed into an eternal now. We have a clue to this in His words, "Before Abraham was I AM," (John 8:58). When the eternal "I AM," pays the penalty for sin "through His eternal spirit," we can be sure that takes care of all sin both now and forever. Our writer does not tell us **HOW** Jesus' blood is applied to the consciences of O.T. believers. He simply says that Jesus' death provides "redemption from the transgressions" committed under the old covenant. That's the way it reads in the Greek

text. If we want to learn the mechanics of the application of Jesus' blood to the O.T. saints and see how they received the eternal inheritance, we must look elsewhere in the N.T.



INHERITANCE. Note that the writer speaks of the ETERNAL inheritance. Once we say that something is **eternal**, we are referring to that which is spiritual and unseen. Why? The things which are unseen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). In O.T. times no one could receive any part of the spiritual inheritance. Until sin was put away by Jesus' sacrifice it was impossible for anyone to receive anything eternal—except hell. To inherit the spiritual promises, one must become a spiritual **son of God**. That requires a new birth. It wasn't available under the old covenant. But under the new covenant, based on Jesus' shed blood, it is a different story. When a person receives Christ via the Spirit, and becomes a son of God, he is entitled to the eternal inheritance. He has certain guaranteed benefits under this covenant such as: (1) total forgiveness for all his sins; (2) a partaker of God's own life; (3) receiving the divine nature; (4) The Lord's righteousness becomes his; (5) he enjoys fellowship with God on a Father and son basis; (6) he is destined to become a king and priest and rule with Christ. It's true that he doesn't enjoy face to face fellowship just yet, but he will (1 Cor. 13:12). Christians walk by faith now. It is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit they will one day see Jesus face to face (Eph. 1:14). Until then we have the privilege of fellowship with Him by faith, for we are as much the sons of God now as we'll ever be. That is our inheritance. By way of our imaginations we can give reality to His unseen presence. He is with us now as surely as He will be in that day. All these benefits are eternal having been provided for us by Jesus. This is the exciting thing about the new covenant.

"Doesn't an inheritance generally require a will?"

16. This new covenant is much like a will. As you

know, the death of the person who makes the will has to be established before the will becomes effective. 17. As long as he is alive the will is not in force and its terms cannot be carried out.



WILL. The Greek word for covenant (diatheke) also means testament or will. Up to this point in his letter, the writer has always used the word in the sense of a covenant. But here in vss. 16 and 17 he suddenly makes a shift and uses the other meaning—**that of a WILL.** It is a clever play on words used to show why Jesus' death is so vital to the new covenant. This play on the double meaning of the word has created confusion among Bible interpreters, but the Greek speaking readers undoubtedly regarded it as a brilliant piece of exposition. In any event, there really isn't a lot of difference between a will or testament and the biblical covenant. In the case of a will, a man disposes of his property as he chooses. He states the terms and lays down the provisions to suit himself. In the case of a covenant between God and man, the same idea is present. It is God, however, and not man, who spells out the terms of the arrangement. He states the terms and sets forth the provisions to suit Himself. Having just mentioned the ETERNAL INHERITANCE in vs. 15, the writer knows his readers will understand why he elected to use the other meaning here. An inheritance is usually distributed according to a will. And where there is a will, the death of the person making the will has to occur before it has any force. So the OTHER MEANING ("will") provided the writer with a unique way of showing WHY Jesus had to die. Unless He died, the terms of the will could not be carried out. But since He HAS DIED, the new covenant (Jesus' Last Will and Testament) is now in force. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead to become the MEDIATOR of His own will, makes the writer's play on words even more remarkable.

18. And do we not find blood associated with the old covenant too? It couldn't be put into effect without

the shedding of blood. 19. You will recall how Moses, after he had presented to the people all the details of the covenant God offered them, took the blood of calves and goats, along with some water, and sprinkled both the Law-book and the people. Using a sprig of hyssop and some scarlet wool, he transferred the blood to them. 20. As he did so, he said to them:

“This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded me to give to you and which now becomes binding upon you.”



OLD COVENANT. Our writer has returned to his standard use of the word covenant. He observes for us that blood was the important factor in the old Jewish covenant. To help his readers get a better grasp on the significance of Christ's death, he recalls for them how the O.T. covenant was confirmed by blood sacrifices. He takes his readers back to Sinai where Moses received the Law from God and in turn gave it to the people. After explaining the terms of the covenant to them, and getting their acceptance of those terms, he had some young men slay the sacrificial animals. There was no priesthood as yet, so these men simply **acted** as priests. Moses had the blood captured and divided it into two parts. Half was sprinkled on the altar (representing God's part in the deal) and the other half was sprinkled on the elders who represented the twelve tribes. Our writer throws in some details which don't appear in the actual account in Ex. 24, such as the water, hyssop and scarlet wool, but those are minor details. The thing to note is Moses' words concerning the blood. As he sprinkled the people, he said, "This is the blood of the covenant, etc. . . ." That's the point the author wants us to see. He wants us to note the close connection between the old covenant and sacrificial blood. Without blood to seal the arrangement, there would have been NO DEAL between God and Israel. This shedding of blood to inaugurate the old covenant was a

TYPE of the shedding of Jesus' blood as the basis of the new covenant.

21. In like manner Moses also sprinkled the tabernacle itself with blood, and all the sacred vessels connected with its ministry. 22. In fact, whenever a person looks into the Law, he finds that practically everything is cleansed by blood. And while there are some exceptions to the Law of purification, the general rule is: without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.



TABERNACLE. We now learn that Moses sprinkled much more than the people and the book with blood. After the tabernacle had been constructed, he sprinkled the entire structure and everything in it with blood. Why does our author tell us that? He wants us to see that anything requiring **ceremonial** cleansing, was cleansed by blood. From the people on down to the vessels of the tabernacle, blood was the big thing in the Jewish program. Everywhere anyone looks into the Law of cleansing he finds sacrificial blood applied for purification. That being the case, it should be no surprise to the Jewish readers of this letter to find the writer putting a similar emphasis on the blood of Jesus. It too is able to purify everything in man—but at the **spiritual level**. The sprinkling of animal blood on everything that needed ceremonial cleansing, pictured the **complete** spiritual cleansing of man by the blood of Jesus. So widespread was the use of blood for cleansing in the O.T. program that it became a saying: "No blood, no cleansing." There were some exceptions to the rule, as when a plague was stopped by the use of a censor, changes of clothing for certain defilements, etc. But 99% of the time it was true, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." This expression, known to his Jewish readers, provided an ideal illustration of the way Christ's blood cleanses us "from **ALL** unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). In Paul's letter to the Colossians we learn that Christ's blood is able to reconcile to

God ALL THINGS whether in heaven or on earth (Col. 1:20). So the O.T. program really did typify the power of Christ's blood to cleanse ALL things.

BLOOD CLEANSING: A TWO-STEP PROCESS

STEP ONE:
slay the animal



STEP TWO:
sprinkle the blood



Observe the two steps in the Israelite ritual. First the animal was slain and its blood captured. There would be no atonement if that was all that happened. A second step was needed, that of applying the blood. Until the blood was applied, the sacrifice did not avail for the offerer. How marvelously this pictures the need to **RECEIVE** Christ. Jesus did indeed die for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). But that does not automatically save the world. Until a person opens his heart and receives Christ, the work of the cross is **NOT APPLIED** to him. But the moment he receives the Lord, his soul is cleansed of all sin. Therefore, the O.T. ritual dramatized the truth that Christ's death, by itself, was not enough. A person must have that death transferred to him or the cross does not benefit him. The only way anyone can receive Christ's death and life, is to receive the Lord Himself (1 John 5:12).



SHEDDING. The term "shedding of blood" is apparently coined by our writer to cover the whole process of the death of the victim and the application of its blood. For the killing of the animal meant

nothing unless the blood was applied. So when the writer says, "without the shedding of blood there is no redemption," it should **not be limited** to the death of the sacrifice. Recall God's words to Moses, "The LIFE of the flesh is in the blood, I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, etc (Lev. 17:11) (In all the ancient sacrifices where blood was used, it was believed that the life of the victim was somehow applied to the worshipper. When this picture is carried over to Jesus, the references to His shed-blood must not be limited to His death at Calvary, but include the application of His life as well. Now it is true that His DEATH put the new covenant into operation, but only those to whom His blood has been APPLIED enjoy the benefits of that covenant. So BOTH elements are needed—the death and the application of the life. This is why we have the BREAD and WINE in the communion. The bread pictures His death on the cross, the wine the application of His life to us. It is possible the writer was thinking of Jesus' words at the Last Supper . . . "This is My blood of the covenant which is to be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28).

"Does the cleansing of the earthly tabernacle with blood symbolize a similar cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary?"

23. So then, if all those animal sacrifices were needed to cleanse the copies and representations of the originals in heaven, surely the heavenly realities must require even better sacrifices!



SO THEN. Our writer continues his argument for the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice. His chief point is that Jesus' blood **really does** cleanse from sin whereas the animal blood cleansed from ceremonial impurity only. In the previous verses he flashed back to Sinai where we saw Moses splashing blood on everything from the people down to the smallest vessels of the

tabernacle. Now the author wants to apply that SAME PRINCIPLE to Jesus and show how the NEW COVENANT is not only put into effect by His blood, but **everything connected with it** is also cleansed by His blood. Thus the widespread use of animal blood in the Jewish program pictured the tremendous cleansing power of Jesus' blood at the spiritual level. The O.T. cleansings were, of course, outward and ceremonial. Jesus' blood is applied to things spiritual. When it comes to sin that is a spiritual matter. Physical blood won't do, not even Jesus' physical blood. In the realm of the spiritual and eternal, it takes a spiritual and eternal sacrifice to cleanse. Therefore a finer and nobler sacrifice is required to cleanse the heavenly realities. The animal blood of earthly sacrifices can only be symbolic of the true cleansing which Jesus' blood provides.



CLEANSE. What does our author mean when he says the "originals in heaven" need cleansing? Surely he is not referring to the presence of God! That's inconceivable. There is no evil there. Some interpreters have suggested that heaven needed cleansing because of the sin of Satan and his followers. There may be truth in that statement, but that is not what the author has in mind here. The whole burden of the book of Hebrews is how Jesus' sacrifice brings men into fellowship with God. Therefore, the primary reference has to do with the cleansing of the believer. The writer has stated repeatedly that Jesus' blood washes the heart and conscience of the believer. This is how He makes it possible for man to approach God and enjoy Him. The purpose of the tabernacle was to provide a way for Israel to come before God. To sprinkle that tabernacle meant to purify it as a place where God and man would meet. It was a meeting place. The real place where the N.T. believer and God meet is in the sanctuary of the imagination. Therefore, it is the Christian who needs cleansing. His heart and mind must be washed before it is possible for him to meet with God. Does not the Word teach that believers are banded together in Christ to form a "habitation for

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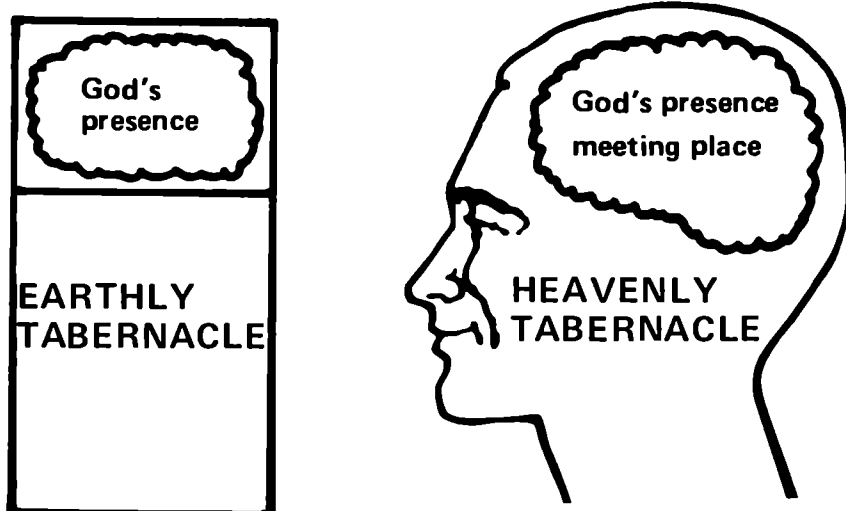
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God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). If so, then we are a "spiritual house," as Peter calls us, and we need to be made holy before a holy God can dwell inside us. Since we are God's house, WE are the heavenly (spiritual) originals needing to be cleansed by the better sacrifice.

MAN'S IMAGINATION: THE HEAVENLY REALITY



The Jewish tabernacle symbolized God's presence on earth and was a place where God and man could meet. The meeting was representative only, for only the high priest could stand before the cloud of the presence. Even so it pictured the true or heavenly (spiritual) situation where God and man actually meet. The meeting place is the imagination of the believer. The O.T. tabernacle was cleansed with animal blood. The N.T. tabernacle is cleansed by the blood of Jesus. With our consciences literally washed free of sin, we can talk to God and enjoy fellowship with Him. The Jewish high priest stood before a manifestation of God's presence on earth, but we enjoy the true presence of God. Our bodies are the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). They house our minds and imaginations, the spiritual realities where God actually dwells.

24. For Christ did not enter into a man made sanctuary on earth, which is at best a mere copy or shadow of the heavenly one. He went into heaven itself where He now appears in God's presence on our behalf.

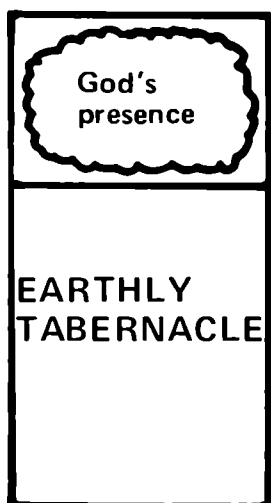


APPEARS. On the Day of Atonement, the Jewish high priest went into the most holy place of the tabernacle to appear before the cloud of God's presence. That cloud symbolized God's presence on earth. It was a physical manifestation. But Jesus, as our high priest, went into the realm where God lives. Since "God is spirit," His dwelling place is also spirit. That's why we approach Him via our imaginations. They're spirit too.

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SAINTS IN THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE



The Jewish high priest stood before a representation of God's presence. He was never in a face to face situation with God, such as Jesus enjoys. The **NOW** in our verse above is significant. That "NOW" is the **eternal now**. There is no past or future in heaven, only NOW. He appears there NOW because that is all there is in heaven—NOW. We are face to face with God at this moment, even though we're not aware of it. Baptized by the Spirit into Christ, we live in the spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). When we put off these mortal bodies and are clothed upon "with our house from heaven," we will be aware of our "face to face" fellowship with God (2 Cor. 5:1,2). For the moment we must enjoy Him by faith. Jesus is NOT busy pleading our cause before God. That was won and settled at Calvary. He lives to guarantee that we are **already alive** in the presence of God. **We** are the "originals in heaven."

But what does Jesus DO FOR US in God's presence? He LIVES there. The very fact that He is ALIVE before God guarantees that we also can live in a face to face relationship with God. Back in 6:20 we learned that Jesus entered heaven as our "forerunner." The Greek word is a military term which refers to a scout who goes ahead of the troops to make sure it is safe for them to follow. That's what Jesus has done. He went ahead of us into God's presence, and because He is **still alive**, it is safe for us to enter. It is now guaranteed that we can stand face to face with God and live. Keep in mind that our writer is speaking to Christian Jews, people familiar with a high priest going into God's presence via an earthly sanctuary. Were he writing to Gentiles, he wouldn't speak of sanctuaries or priests at all. Instead, he would talk of being born of God through faith in Jesus and how our heavenly Father longs for us to come to Him and have fellowship with Him. But to Jewish readers, our writer explains the work of Christ in terms already familiar to them. They would not abandon the faith if they could see how Jesus' death did more for them than any sacrifice offered by a Jewish high priest.

"What is the greatest difference between our high priest and the Jewish high priest?"

25. What's more, the offering of Himself is not like that of the Jewish high priest who goes into the holy place year after year with blood other than his own.



NOT LIKE. Our writer now draws a striking contrast between the offering made by Jesus and that of the Jewish high priest. When Jesus entered into God's presence it was on the basis of His **own** blood. His own shed blood gave Him the right to enter the heavenly sanctuary. How different from the Jewish high priest who entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. He couldn't go in on the basis of his own blood. The required sacrifice had to be without spot, and the Jewish high priest was far from being spotless. He needed a sacri-

fice for his own sins. So he took the blood of a spotless (and innocent) animal. Having no sins of His own, Jesus needed no such sacrifice. He was absolutely spotless, therefore, He could offer **Himself** to God. Thus, He was both the offerer and the offering. The contrast continues when we see that the Jewish priest had to **withdraw immediately** after presenting his offering. He wasn't allowed to remain in God's presence. What's more, he had to go back and do the same thing the following year, because there were more sins to be atoned for. Since the old covenant was repeatedly broken, sacrifices were needed year after year. But since Jesus was perfect, so was His offering. When He presented Himself to God, He was accepted as the one offering which would take care of ALL sin. Consequently, He didn't have to withdraw, as did the Jewish priest. His entrance was "once for all." That is why He remains in God's presence NOW (eternal now) as our mediator.

26. If He were like the Jewish priests, Jesus would be dying over and over ever since the world began. As it is, He appeared once for all, at the climax of history, to erase sin completely by the sacrifice of Himself.



ERASE. On the surface this verse seems to say that sin has been removed from the universe. We know that isn't so, because we sin daily and the evidence of depravity is all around us. How then do we understand our author? The matter becomes clear when we consider **THREE THINGS** Jesus accomplished by His sacrifice; (1) He has made it possible for God to forgive and therefore "remember their iniquities no more." Our sins have been erased from the mind of God and from His book of remembrance. (2) His blood (applied to our consciences) witnesses that there is now "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Therefore, we also forget our sins. (3) By His obedient life in which He sacrificed His own will, going even to the cross, He created a new kind of living. It is a life where only the will of God is done. The name He gives it . . . "eternal

life.” Thus, to have eternal life, means more than eternal existence in God’s presence. It is a different KIND of life, one lived for God rather than self. When we receive the Lord, we also receive this life. So that even though we live in a corrupt world, we have a new, holy nature which doesn’t belong to this world at all. Yes, we still have the old nature and sin whenever we yield to it, but we also have this new holy nature that cannot sin. And when we submit to the new nature, we live unto God even as Jesus did. One day this old world will be destroyed, and our old nature along with it. God, Who is not in the repair business, will create a new heaven and a new earth. We will then live the new life, eternal life, in the new world. When that happens, sin, which was introduced by Satan, will have been utterly erased.

27. As surely as men die but once and after that the judgment, 28. so Christ was offered once to take away the sins of man. When He appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin any more, but to bring the final phase of salvation to those awaiting His coming.



SO CHRIST. To emphasize that Christ’s death is never to be repeated, our author draws a parallel between the life of man and the life of Christ. In history a man is born, lives and dies but once. All that remains after that is judgment. He cannot return to earth for a fresh start or second chance. In the same way, Jesus was born as a man. He lived and died as do all men and cannot return to live that life over again. Had He failed to atone for our sins, He would not have a second chance. But He didn’t fail, as His glorious appearing will prove. When He returns His coming will not be connected with sin in any way. He is through with sin once for all. When He comes again, it will be to bring to His people the final stage of the blessings He won for them at Calvary. This is the **greatest difference** between the ministry of Jesus and that of the Jewish high priest. When the

Jewish priest came out from behind the veil and appeared to the people, he wasn't through with sin. He had to go back and do the same thing the following year. He was never through dealing with sin. But when Jesus comes back from behind the true veil, He will not be returning as a priest, but as a triumphant KING eager to reward His faithful followers. Here then is the big contrast. The Jewish priest was never through with sin, Jesus is ALL THROUGH with it.

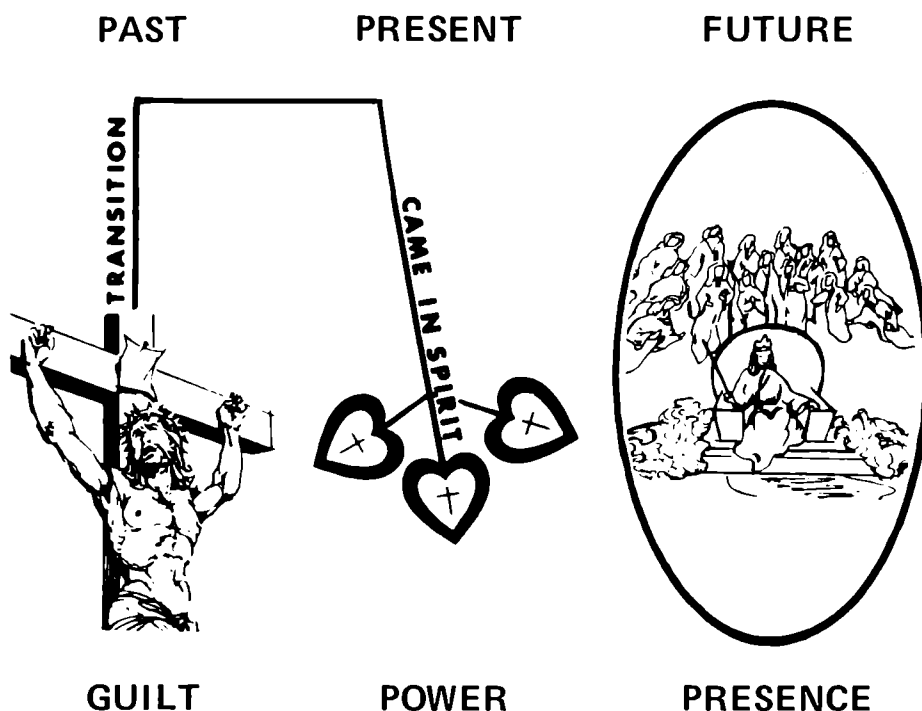


SECOND TIME. This is the only explicit statement in the New Testament that Jesus' parousia (coming) will be a second appearing to the world. He will be visible to the human eye just as the angels said He would (Acts 1:11). And as He said He would (Matt. 24:30). Our writer obviously has in mind the Day of Atonement and that moment when the Jewish high priest emerged from the tabernacle. When he went into the most holy place to present the blood offering, he wore white linen. But before he reappeared to the waiting crowd, he changed into his ornate garments of "glory and beauty." See how this pictures the Lord's work? When He entered the heavenly sanctuary via the cross, He wore only the "white linen" of his personal righteousness. Yet when He reappears to the world at His second coming, He will be clothed in His ROYAL GLORY! We shall then see Him as He is, the triumphant King of Kings and Lord of Lords! At this moment He enjoys God's full approval of His work for us at Calvary. But in that day the WHOLE WORLD will see Him as He is and every knee shall bow to Him. Bear in mind that He died as a man; He now serves us in the heavenly sanctuary as a man; and when He comes again it will be as a MAN!



AWAITING. When our writer says that Jesus is bringing the final phase of salvation to those "awaiting Him," he does NOT mean that God is going to distinguish between those who are looking for Him and those who are not. God is not a dispensationalist. All those who are "born-again," are considered waiting

THE FINAL PHASE OF SALVATION



In vss. 23-28 we have three appearances of Christ and they summarize for us the three stages of salvation: PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE. First, He appeared in the world to erase sin by the sacrifice of Himself. That took care of the GUILT of sin. Then He appeared in heaven, where, as our mediator, He helps us deal with the POWER of sin in our lives. Finally, He will appear **to the world** a second time at which time we will all be CHANGED and delivered from the PRESENCE of sin (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). His third appearance will bring our salvation to completion, when we will be revealed as the sons of God. We will then have been delivered from the guilt, the power and the presence of sin completely. From that point on we reign with the Lord Jesus in the new life, sharing His inheritance with Him (Rom. 8:17).

for the Lord. There are devout believers today **who do not** anticipate a VISIBLE return of the Lord, but that won't make any difference. All believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13). In that day, says the apostle Paul, "We shall ALL be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51). And he means every single

Christian regardless of his dispensational expectations. What really matters is: do we trust Him as our personal Savior? If we do, then when He appears, we shall “also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). In that day, we shall ALL be like Him (1 John 3:2). Appearing with Christ in our new glorified bodies is the final phase of our salvation. And included in that phase, of course, is reigning with Him in His kingdom. At this point, only our souls have been redeemed. But in that day, our bodies will also be redeemed (Rom. 8:23). When that happens, the world will know that HE is the Son of God and that we’re God’s sons too.

“Why is Jesus’ sacrifice the only effective one?”

10 1. There was no way for the Jewish system of sacrifices to bring to anyone the benefits of Christ, since it didn’t contain them. Judaism was not the real thing, but only a shadow of what was to come through Christ later on. Therefore those sacrifices which the Law required, and which were made endlessly year after year, couldn’t give anyone the perfection he needed to come to God.



SHADOW. For the last two chapters our writer has been comparing the Jewish priesthood with the priesthood of Christ. He is almost to the end of his argument. Before he closes, he wants to press one more point—the superiority of Jesus’ sacrifice. He wants to show how perfect it is. He does so, first of all, by showing how **imperfect** the Jewish sacrifices were. The legal sacrifices, he says, were only shadows of what was to come through Christ. Now shadows never give a clear picture of anything. Nearly everyone has been frightened by the shadow of a tree or bush at some time, thinking it was a monster. That’s because the shadow does not give a true picture of the tree or limb. It is impossible to look at a shadow and figure out what the real thing is. That was the weakness of Judaism. When you consider all that blood of those animals slain over 1400 years, it

makes God appear as a bloodthirsty monster. There is nothing inviting or joyful in the shadow, and certainly no hint of fellowship with a loving God. Not until Jesus came did men have a clear picture of what God is like and how to enjoy Him. Jesus is the real thing. Far from being a shadow, He is the perfect image of God. If men love Jesus and enjoy Him they will enjoy God, because they are one and the same. The Jewish program, however, did point prophetically to the perfect sacrifice that was to come. But it could not give man the perfection he needed to approach or feel at home with a holy God. Only Jesus could do that.

2. If they could, then those offerings would have ceased long before now. In fact, one would have been enough. People whose consciences have been cleansed don't feel guilty any more, and have no further need of sacrifices. 3. But as it is, those annual sacrifices serve only to remind the people of their sins, 4. for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away the guilt of sin.



CONSCIENCES. Our writer says it is impossible for the legal sacrifices of the Jews to cleanse a person's conscience. By nature, laws can't do anything to help a man's conscience. But they can do a lot to convict his conscience. A nation can pass all the law it wants, but that won't make the people any better. Consider the traffic laws, for example. They don't make people better drivers, but if you break any of those rules, the law quickly cites you and fines you. Similarly, the Jewish Law could demand righteousness of its people, but it couldn't make them righteous. The sacrifices, instead of erasing sins, could only remind the people of how sinful they were. Had any of those sacrifices the power to erase the guilt of sin, the sacrifices would have ceased at once. When our writer speaks of cleansing the conscience, he means a true, inner cleansing which lasts forever—a cleansing that never has to be repeated once it is received. When a cure for polio or some other dread

disease is discovered, it doesn't have to be discovered all over again. In the same way, when the TRUE cure for sin comes along, you only need it once. You don't have to take it over and over again. The author clearly has this in mind when he says one sacrifice would have been enough. Indeed the sacrifices would have ceased. That the Jewish sacrifices had to be repeated is PROOF they had no power to cleanse.



REMINDE. The fact that the Law **COMMANDED** **REPEATED** sacrifices shows that it did not **EXPECT** to perfect anyone. It's true the sacrifices provided ceremonial cleansing, so that a defiled person could be restored to the congregation of Israel. But that kind of cleansing should not be mentioned in the same breath with the spiritual cleansing that comes through the blood of Christ. That is spiritual forgiveness, and only the spiritual death of Christ can provide it. Consequently, every time they brought an offering to the altar, the O.T. worshippers were reminded that they were sinners needing cleansing. But you ask, what was the value of the O.T. sacrifice? It pictured the coming Redeemer. If a worshipper could move his faith from the sacrifice to the One it pictured he was accepted by God. True, he didn't know much about Him, but through the promises he had the hope of a better life to come. True, he had to wait until the perfect sacrifice (Jesus) was offered to God, but his faith in the **One to come** secured for him the perfection needed to fellowship with God in heaven. When the writer speaks of a remembrance of sins year after year, he is contrasting it with the New Covenant promise, "**I will remember their iniquities no more**" (8:12). Whereas the O.T. program reminded the people they were sinners, the New Covenant makes it possible for us to forget it. Christians are able to confess and forget their sins. While it's true that unconfessed sin does NOT damage the believer's worship, it definitely can hinder his fellowship with God and make his prayer life ineffective.

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5. This is why Jesus, at His coming into the world, said:

“O God, You don’t want sacrifices and burnt offerings, that’s why You prepared a body for me;
6. All those animals, Father, which were slain and burnt upon the altar as sacrifices for sin, never really pleased You.”

7. Following that He said,

“I have come, O God, to do Your will, just as the Scriptures said I would.”



THIS IS WHY. Having shown that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin, the writer has prepared the way to show how Jesus Himself is the only acceptable sacrifice. He begins by taking us to the 40th Psalm. He puts the words of this Psalm, particularly vss. 6–8 into the mouth of Jesus and has Him saying these words at the time of His incarnation. First the Lord says that God takes no delight in animal sacrifices at all. Not only has the Father never cared for them, but what He really wants is OBE-
DENCE. From the time of Adam, obedience was the only sacrifice God desired. But it is the one sacrifice He’s never received. Until Jesus came, no one ever obeyed God as He longs to be obeyed. That kind of obedinece requires total sacrifice of SELF. The Lord’s body is mentioned because it is the MEANS by which He gives this obedience. He is rendering this obedience to God AS A MAN. A body was prepared for Jesus, even as it is for us. Our parents may bring forth a body, but only God decides WHO will live in that body. He prepares a body for every person coming into the world. For Jesus to serve God as a MAN, He had to have a body just like ours.



DO YOUR WILL. The words of the Psalm announce that Jesus had come into the world to be the sacrifice that God wanted. How? By doing

God's will. "I have come, O God, to do Your will. . ."
When we study the life of Jesus we see that it is summed up in those words. . . "do Your will." This was the theme of His life, His REAL sacrifice. The cross was NOT the sacrifice of Jesus. He sacrificed His **entire** life for us. How? By denying Himself and doing only what God wanted Him to do. His great passion to please His Father took Him to the cross. The cross was the end of the line, the final step. From the wilderness temptation to the garden of Gethsemane, the devil tried in every way to get Jesus to do His own will; to live for Himself. He wanted Jesus to "do His own thing," just as he did. But Jesus refused. Not once, in all His life, did He do anything but what the Father wanted. His own will was denied continuously. In the garden He said, "NOT MY WILL, but Thine be done." He denied Himself totally. He chose to DIE rather than do His own will. And His own will was clearly in evidence. . . "Father, let this cup pass from Me." That was Jesus' will—as a MAN. But He denied Himself to do God's will. His life of perfect obedience gave God what He had always wanted. What Adam refused to give Him in the garden of Eden, Jesus gave Him in the garden of Gethsemane. When we receive Him, His life becomes our life, His sacrifice our sacrifice; and His righteousness our righteousness. This is what makes it possible for God to be pleased with us—
IN HIM.

8. Now when Jesus said that God neither wanted nor was pleased with sacrifices and burnt offerings, though the Law required them, 9. and followed that by saying He had come to do the will of God, He was canceling the old program with its animal sacrifices and establishing a new one based on obedience to God's will.



NEW ONE. From the beginning God knew man would never be able to give Him the obedience He wanted. With the fall of Adam, man acquired a disobedient nature. This made it impossible for him to



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With the fall of Adam, man acquired a disobedient nature. This made it impossible for him to redeem himself. Until Jesus came, no one ever obeyed God as He longs to be obeyed. He is rendering this obedience to God, and His obedience becomes ours.

redeem himself. That fallen nature is a self-centered nature, dominated by Mr. Ego himself. Satan's theme song is "my will be done." That same theme rings in our old natures. As long as man has a fallen nature, it is guaranteed that he is going to "do his own thing." Therefore when God established the Law with its sacrifices, He knew man would never make himself holy by that means. **But man didn't know it.** The O. T. program was set up to **show man** how bad he was. The death of all those animals dramatized his sinfulness. Everywhere you looked there was a demonstration of the truth. . . "The wages of sin is death." Sin, at its deepest

root, is doing what WE want to do rather than what God wants us to do. The devil lives for himself. Through the old nature, we are led to do the same. So from the beginning it was clear that sacrificial offerings could never do the job. As early as the prophet Samuel, the people were told, "Behold it is better to obey than to sacrifice." From Samuel onward, this message was repeated by one prophet after another. Disobedience and self-will created a barrier between God and man and no animal sacrifice could take it away. Then Jesus came and offered Himself as a LIVING sacrifice. Our writer quotes this Psalm to show that the O.T. sacrificial program has been replaced by the sacrifice of Jesus' will to the will of God.

THREE IMPORTANT SCRIPTURES IN HEBREWS

Psalm 110



**priesthood
of Jesus**

Jeremiah 31



**the New
Covenant
written on
their hearts**

Psalm 40



**the New
Covenant
based on
obedience**

Now that we're coming to the end of the theological section of Hebrews, it is good to consider the three principal passages which have formed the basis of the writer's argument. The 110th Psalm announced that Jesus would be a priest after the order of Melchizedec; an order wholly removed from any of the Jewish orders. The prophet Jeremiah announced that God was going to make a New Covenant with His people; one which would be written on their hearts; one which provided that their sins would be remembered no more. Psalm 40 announced that God has never cared for the offering of slain animals; that He wants obedience. The Psalm says that Messiah will give God the obedience He desires. The New Covenant is based on the obedience of Jesus to God's will, by which obedience He secured our salvation once for all.

“Would Jesus’ sacrifice ever need to be repeated?”

10. For it is by means of His complete obedience to God’s will that Jesus has cleansed us from our sins through the offering of His body once for all



OFFERING. When our writer speaks of Jesus’ body as an offering to God, we are NOT to think that God had any pleasure in the killing of Jesus’ body on the cross. Jesus’ body was **not** offered up like an animal sacrifice. God has no pleasure in the killing of ANY body. The sacrifice is Jesus HIMSELF. The Lord’s physical body was simply the means by which He could offer His LIFE to God. It would not be possible apart from a body. When Jesus came into this world He **emptied Himself** of the majesty of Deity, so that He arrived **as any other MAN**. He was limited to the BRAIN which came with the body. His mind was cut off from any DIRECT contact with the spirit-realm. He had to live by faith, the same as we. In so doing, He had a **will of His own**. Even though He was God in His Person He was now like any other man—free to obey or disobey the Father. If this were not so, He could not be tempted, neither would the surrender of His will be a sacrifice. Thus it was His body which made possible the offering of Himself. All of His life, from His baptism to the cross, was ONE ACT of obedience. It was a living sacrifice of His will. There was not a single interruption in His submission of Himself to the Father. This total surrender finally put His body on the cross. Because His sacrifice was perfect, it never has to be repeated. When we receive Him as Savior, His perfect sacrifice cleanses us once for all. And that cleansing is as unrepeatable as the sacrifice which secured it.

11. The poor Jewish priests must stand there day after day, going through the same routines, offering again and again the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. 12. But Jesus, having offered one

sacrifice for sins which is good for all time, has taken His seat at the right hand of God, 13. where He will remain until all of His enemies are made a footstool under His feet.



STAND. Our writer has chosen his words with care. When he speaks of the Jewish priests as standing, he knows his readers will picture the endless routines of the daily sacrifices. There was no seat or chair in the tabernacle. The Jewish priests had to stand up all the time. Their continual standing was a reminder that their work was never done. No matter how faithfully they carried out one sacrifice, others had to be offered in due course. As long as there was a temple (and there was until 70 A.D.) the routine was continued and man's deepest need was kept in view. The word "stand" would cause the Jewish readers to visualize the priestly treadmill of sacrifice and how powerless it was to put away sins. But oh how different in Jesus' case. When He had made but ONE sacrifice, He **sat down**. He could do so, because His sacrifice was perfect. No more was needed. His one sacrifice **actually put away** the sins of His people. The fact that He is seated is proof that His work is finished; that it has been accepted; that it is perfect. It does not have to be repeated—it is good forever!



REMAIN. The fact that Jesus is seated at God's right hand reminds us that He is THE KING as well as our High Priest. But He's a king with enemies. As we read these lines, we're struck with the idea that something isn't finished yet. What? There are enemies yet to be subdued. . .and Jesus must remain in the spirit realm until this had been done. Now who are these enemies? It's a sad fact that most people want no part of Jesus or His sacrifice (Matt. 7:13). It seems unthinkable that anyone would reject what Jesus has done for them, but few have any desire for Him. When people spurn the Lord's wooing and reject His Spirit, they become hostile toward Him. "He that is not with Me,"

said Jesus, "is against Me." (Matt. 12:30). Those refusing Jesus' offer to save them remain in Satan's camp (Col. 1:13). Whether inwardly or outwardly, they are His enemies. Therefore, says the writer, the Lord must wait in the spirit-realm until all who will come to Him, do come, and all who are going to reject Him have had their opportunity. We know from other Scriptures that the Lord is going to subdue all of His enemies when He comes the second time. However the writer to the Hebrews sees this as already done. So he quotes again from the 110th Psalm, citing a portion which has not been emphasized before—that the Lord would wait in heaven until His enemies were "made a footstool under His feet." I take this to mean that He will wait in heaven until the time is ripe for Him to execute authority over the earth and rule the nations with a "rod of iron" (Rev. 19:15).

"Then all sacrifices have come to an end, right?"

14. For by the single offering of Himself, He has made perfect forever those whom He is setting free from sin.



PERFECT FOREVER. We've already seen how Jesus' entire life was one single act of obedience. He did only the Father's will, never His own. This made Him the perfect sacrifice. With His single offering He accomplished what generations of Jewish sacrifices could not do, i.e. cleanse His people from the guilt of sin and bring them into a perfect relationship with God. Now when our writer says believers are "made perfect," it sounds as if they are perfect in behavior. That's not what he means. He means they have a perfect relationship with God. When we're saved, we're baptized into Jesus' perfection and at the same time, He implants His perfect nature in us. We are therefore morally perfect (judicially perfect) in God's sight. This doesn't mean that we do not sin. We are still growing and reaching for maturity. We sin in the process. But there is no condemnation because we're in Christ (Rom. 8:1). Our writer is

NOT thinking of our progressive holiness, the changes which occur in us as we try to outlive the holy nature we have received. He is thinking, instead, of the INSTANTANEOUS HOLINESS which is ours when we are baptized into Christ. It is this holiness which guarantees our perfect relationship with God. That's the perfection our writer has in mind. Even though the Lord is presently setting us free from sin in our daily walk, that perfect relationship we have with God cannot be touched or marred. **It is as perfect as the sacrifice which secured it.**

15. What's more, this truth is affirmed to us by the Holy Spirit Himself as He bears witness to our hearts. First He says:

16. **"This New Covenant which I am going to establish with the house of Israel will be like this: after those days, says the Lord, I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts."**

17. And after that what did He say?

"I will forgive their sins and remember their evil ways no more."

18. Now when God forgives all sin and forgets it forever, there is no need for any further sacrifices to take away sins.



HOLY SPIRIT. Earlier our writer put the words of the 40th Psalm on the lips of Jesus. He had the Lord saying that God was **never at any time pleased** with animal sacrifices. In case some of his readers were unimpressed with that technique, he clinches his argument by adding another witness—the Holy Spirit. He quotes Jeremiah 31:33-34 once again, and this time he says they are the words of the Holy Spirit. He obviously believed in direct inspiration. In effect, what he is saying here is that the Holy Spirit confirms to our hearts the truth that those who trust in Jesus are per-

fect in the sight of God. Now the O.T. saints read these verses, but they didn't understand them as we do. According to our writer, the Holy Spirit opens them to us. We wouldn't know that the promises of the New Covenant pertained to those who put their trust in Christ, except the Spirit witnessed to that truth. The text certainly doesn't say so. Yet the words clearly refer to the **new birth** of the believer. The New Covenant plainly speaks of the transformation of a man from **the inside out**. That takes the new birth. Whereas God, in O. T. times imposed His Law ON man from the outside, He now does a work IN man. Or to use the language of Jeremiah, "write them on their hearts." The N.T. believer spontaneously loves God and desires to obey Him, because it is part of his **new nature** to do so. But that's not all the New Covenant awards the believer. He is also assured of the complete forgiveness of his sins. They are eternally erased from God's record, for He says, "I will remember them no more." The perfect sacrifice of Jesus guarantees the Christian eternal forgiveness for his sins.



NO FURTHER SACRIFICES. A wonderful conclusion flows from what the writer has just said—no more sacrifices are needed to take away sins! What glorious words! The era of perfection has arrived. We're in it! The old system is gone. Our holy God, Who knows the secrets of our hearts and the depth of our depravity, remembers them no more—in Christ. The blood of Christ does such a thorough job on our consciences that by evening we don't remember the sins we committed in the morning. And even for those sins that do come to mind, the Spirit witnesses to our conscience that "**there is no condemnation.**" The blood of Jesus erases the GUILT from our minds. The Jewish sacrifices caused the people to **remember** their sins, but the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus causes us to FORGET ours. How marvelous if Christians everywhere could learn to REST in that truth. Sadly, though, many are not able to trust in the perfection of Jesus' work for them. That perfect sacrifice secured perfect forgiveness, now and forever. Well, we've come to the end of the doctrinal part of Hebrews. The writer has proved his case. There can no longer be any doubt, Christianity is vastly superior to Judaism. The

old system with its bondage and endless sacrifices was powerless to help man at the point of his greatest need. It has been replaced by the new program based on the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, which cleanses the believer from the guilt of sin and makes him a child of God. There will never be another sacrifice for sin, for the offering of Jesus has brought us into a perfect relationship with God which lasts forever.

END OF THE DOCTRINAL SECTION

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The writer has finished his argument. He has not only shown that Christ is superior to the angels and the prophets, but to the Law and its priesthood. His one perfect sacrifice not only fulfilled all that was required by the Law, but also fulfilled everything pictured by the Law. By His life of perfect obedience (His sacrifice), the Lord—as a man—created a new kind of life, called “eternal life.” It is a holy realm, the realm of the Holy Spirit. And believers are baptized into that realm (Col. 1:13; I Cor. 12:13). Even though we still have our old natures, we are CITIZENS of that realm now (Phil. 3:20).

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of Christ (Holy Ghost) came from the presence of God to bring this “eternal life” to men. Those who receive the Spirit become the children of God and HAVE eternal life that instant (I John 5:12). Through the power of Jesus’ cleansing blood (the sacrifice applied) even the weakest saint was privileged to have fellowship with God. As we come to part two of Hebrews, the practical section, the writer will ask Christians to lay hold of their position in Christ and take advantage of the benefits Jesus secured for them.

* * * * *

"How should believers respond to their new relationship with God?"

19. And so then, my brothers, because of the blood of Jesus, let us go boldly right into the holiest place of all, the very presence of God.



SO THEN. Having set forth the utter perfection of Christ's sacrifice, the writer is ready to urge his readers to take advantage of what Jesus has provided for them. It is not enough to **KNOW** what Jesus has done for them, there are practical benefits which should **appear** in their lives. He wants His readers to move from principle to practice, and it is obvious why. None of us really has anything until we make **USE** of it. For example, it is one thing to know all about God's grace toward us, another to **RELAX** in it. Spiritual wealth, like physical wealth, consists not in the possession, but the enjoyment of it. One might think of the famous Hettie Green who had millions in the bank, but was such a miserable person, her wealth was meaningless to her. She roamed alleys, plundering trash barrels for the bits and pieces of junk which filled her rat infested apartment. As wealthy as she was, she died amidst squalor as might any pauper. Christians can do the same. Wealthy in Christ, yet living so far below their privileges they exist as spiritual paupers. The first thing our author urges his readers to do is to appreciate the wide-open, uninhibited, unlimited access to God that Jesus' sacrifice has provided.



BOLDLY. As we have noted so many times before, only the Jewish high priest could go into God's presence in O.T. times, and then only once a year. Christians, on the other hand, can go anytime and as often as they wish. Not only that, they are privileged to come "boldly." But that boldness is never to be interpreted as rudeness or impertinence. While the Father aches for intimacy with us, He is still our God and reve-

rent respect is due Him. Nonetheless, He hates formality. Our boldness is to be expressed in informality and casualness. He longs for His children to draw closer and closer to Him. Down deep inside, God is a "cuddler." He loves to have us snuggle up to Him by faith. This privilege is made possible by the blood of Jesus. His sacrifice procured for us the same right of entry that Christ Himself enjoys. Think of it, we are as welcome before God as Jesus! But HOW do we go boldly into God's presence? Does the writer mean that we should pray a lot? More than that. He is asking us to visualize the Lord in our imaginations and develop an intimate personal relationship with Him. We are offered the thrill of having the One Who made us as a moment by moment FRIEND, eager to share every joy, every thought and every problem we have. By "boldly," the author is saying, dare to become INTIMATE with God. That is just the opposite of the formality which separated God from His people in O.T. times.

20. For you see, a new and living way into the Father's presence has been opened to us by Jesus' passing through the veil, that is, His flesh.



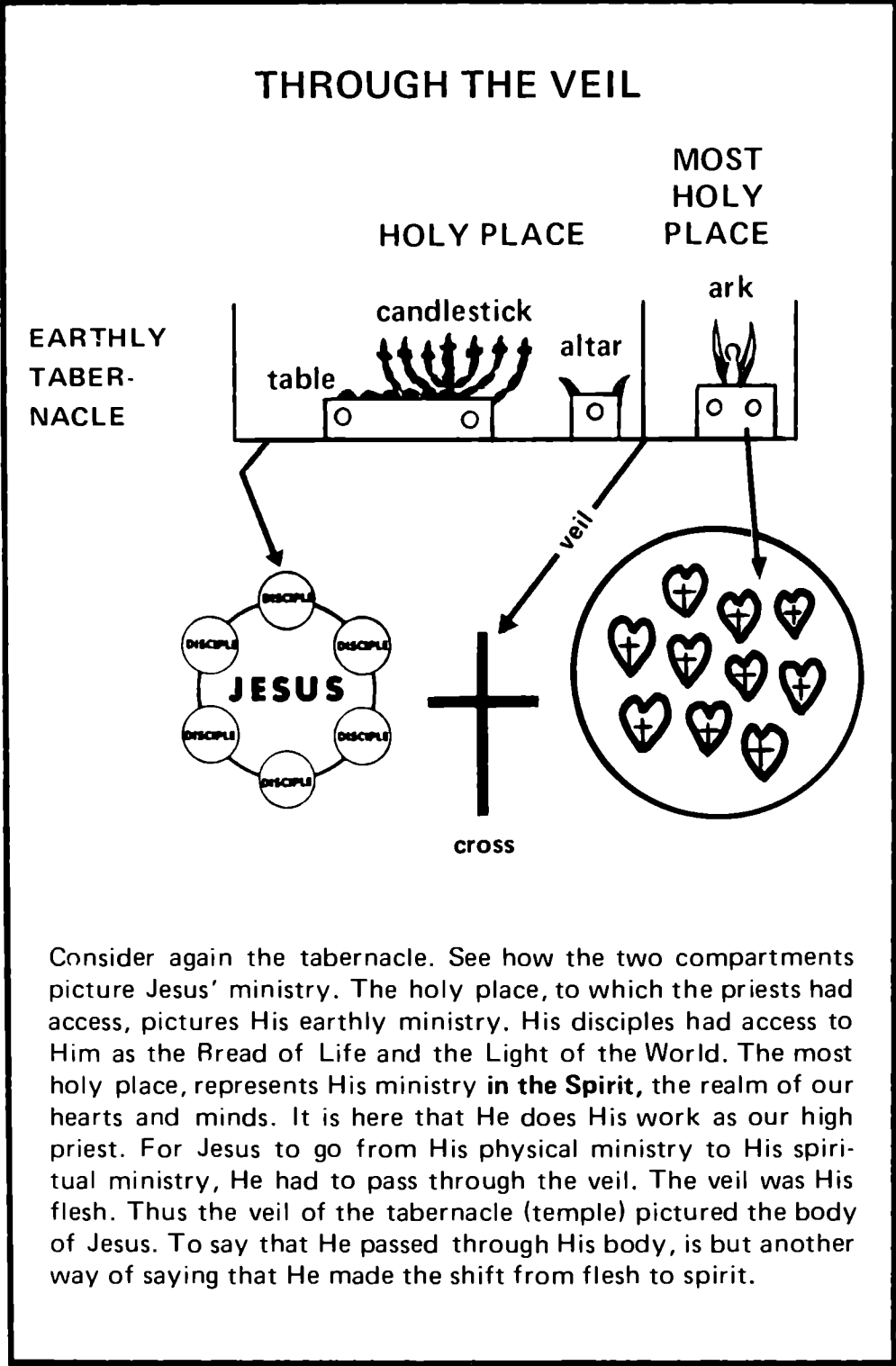
LIVING WAY. When the writer says a NEW way has been opened into God's presence he does NOT mean to imply that there was an OLD way. There never was ANY way to God until Jesus came and opened it for man. Jesus is HIMSELF the way to God. He said so. "I am the WAY...the LIFE; no man comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). To us, the word "way," generally means a road or a path. We shuttle about this world over roadways or airways. But in God's world, the way is a Person. Because that Person is ALIVE, it is a **living way**. By means of His LIFE we enter a LIFE. The moment a person opens his heart to Jesus, the Spirit of Christ enters and he is instantly joined to the Lord. Since He is alive in God's presence, so are we...because we are IN HIM. Now for Jesus to open this way, He had to die physically. He had to pass through His own

flesh. Since “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” there was no way for Jesus to take His body with Him (I Cor. 15:50). Human flesh is a barrier. Jesus had to pass through it. He crashed through that barrier on the cross, proving it to be a harmless experience by His resurrection. All men, including Jesus, are imprisoned in flesh, limited to the BRAIN which comes with the body. Even though they are essentially minds, they are forced to think with the brain. Once released from the body, they are free to operate at the MIND or SPIRIT LEVEL. There was no way for Jesus to fulfill His ministry as our high priest while in a body. To function in the heavenly sanctuary, He had to be free of the flesh so that He could operate as the OMNIPRESENT SPIRIT of Christ. He passed through His flesh (died physically) that He might make Himself available to men as the Spirit of Christ. That’s how He opened the way to God.



VEIL. When the author uses the word “veil,” he is thinking of the veil of the tabernacle, which separated the holy place from the most holy place. He was undoubtedly familiar with the incident which occurred when Jesus died on the cross. At that precise moment, the veil of the temple in Jerusalem was “torn in two from top to bottom” (Mk. 15:38). The purpose of the temple veil was to keep people out of the most holy place. The presence of God was BEHIND that veil. No one but the high priest was allowed to enter. The tearing of the temple veil corresponded to the tearing of Jesus’ body on the cross. His death OPENED the way to God’s presence, as we have already seen. And simultaneous with that, God ripped the temple veil, symbolizing the opening of the WAY TO GOD. Of course the grand opening came on the day of Pentecost. It was a remarkable event, attended by sight and sound phenomena (fire and tongues). On that day, Jesus as the OMNIPRESENT SPIRIT, made Himself available to the world. He was literally poured out on mankind and is STILL being offered that way. Anyone who is willing can receive Him. When they do, the way is

opened to them. They are at once enthroned with Christ in the spirit and have instant access to God's presence.



21. Since we have this mighty high priest who pre-
sides over God's household, 22. let us, as members
of His family, exercise our right of access and press

closer and closer to the Father. But we must come with childlike faith and the unshakable assurance that He is eager to receive us, for our souls have been cleansed by Jesus' precious blood, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.



HIGH PRIEST. It is one thing for the writer to tell his Jewish readers to "come boldly," quite another for them to do it. Raised in the tradition of the temple where they were taught that they were barred from God's presence because of their sins, it is hard for them to think they can now approach Him with boldness. It was ground into them that they had no business in God's presence, no right to be there. Even though the writer tells them that Jesus' blood has taken away every bit of their guilt, it is difficult for them to accept that fact with complete confidence. They know they are still sinners. This makes them shy away from a bold entrance into the most holy place. Refusing to come this way, however, is an act of unbelief. Aware of their reluctance, the writer gives them another reason not to fear—a high priest seated at God's right hand. We have already seen how our high priest LIVES to HELP us. He knows how weak we are, how prone we are to sin. Since He Himself is a MAN, He knows what it is like to have two natures and be subjected to Satan's power. Having gone through the experience Himself, He is sympathetic to our situation (4:15-16). So, by His Holy Spirit (The Spirit of Christ), He witnesses to our spirit (Rom. 8:16). His Spirit says to us, "My blood has taken care of ALL your sin. You're a member of the divine family now. So don't be afraid, come boldly." It's a sad thing that even today we have believers who cannot apprehend this great truth and enjoy the Lord in complete confidence of sins forgiven. They have no real conception of what it means to have that "veil" torn down. They think of themselves as still on probation, and if they can somehow remain true to their profession of faith, they'll finally make it into the presence of God one day. What joy and peace is lost

through failing to understand our glorious position in Christ.



BLOOD/WATER. The writer does an arresting thing in speaking of coming to God with unshakable assurance. He refers to blood and WATER. We understand the inner cleansing from sin by the blood of Jesus, but why does he mention EXTERNAL things such as the body and washing it with water? How can water possibly help one's approach to God? Observe first that he speaks of "pure" water. "Pure" here must be taken in the sense of "holy" in that it is devoted to God's use. It does not mean that it is distilled or boiled, or has any sacredness about it. That means it is used for **ceremonial** cleansing such as we find, for example, in the washing of the O.T. priests at the laver before entering the tabernacle to minister before the Lord (Lev. 8:6; Ex. 30:19-21). The N.T. use of "holy" water is in baptism. But how does baptism make one comfortable in God's presence? We know it is an **outward** act of obedience. In N.T. times, baptism for a Jew was the public renunciation of Judaism and the outward confession of Jesus as his Messiah. For the Gentile it means the renunciation of a godless, self centered life, to a brand new walk of obedience in the life that he has received from Jesus. In that it is a **PUBLIC** act, it means the believer is **NOT ASHAMED** of Christ. It's true that baptism is **ceremonial only**. It has no saving value. Unless a man's soul has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, a thousand baptisms would be meaningless. But since Jesus made it a part of the great commission, this open confession by baptism is apparently a vital part of the gospel (Matt. 28:19). Many Christians are stymied in their growth and freedom to enjoy God's presence because of their disobedience in this matter. It is clearly the first step of an unashamed life for the Lord. The man who refuses to take it apparently doesn't have the unshakable assurance that God is eager to receive him.

23. Don't let your confidence in God become shaky.

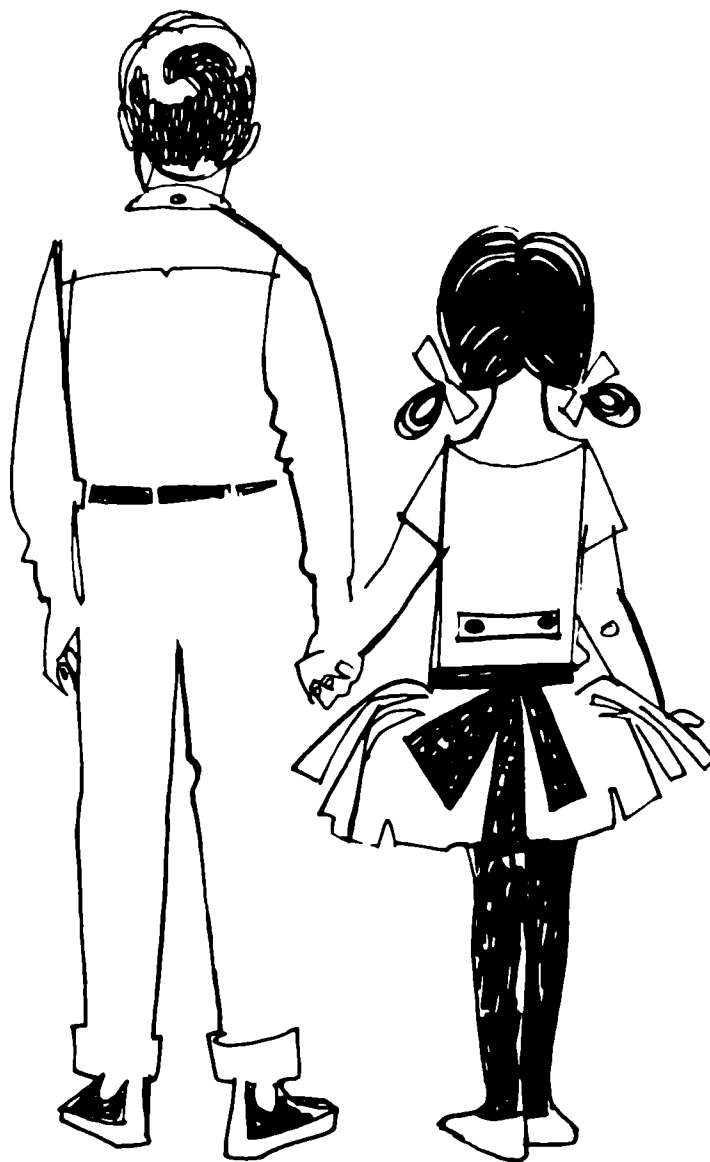
He is faithful and keeps His promises. Instead let us doggedly confess the hope we cherish, because our expectations are as sure as His Word.



CONFESS. In these verses (19-25), the author is delivering three exhortations based on the cleansing Jesus has provided. Note how each begins the same: (1) Let us press closer to God; (2) Let us confess the hope; (3) Let us consider one another. In this verse we're concerned with the second exhortation—confessing our great Christian hope. That hope, of course, is our appearing with Jesus when He returns in power and glory and our being seen by the world for who we are—the sons of God! When this letter was written the Jewish Christians were suffering for their faith. The Lord had delayed His return and Judaism was still going full blast. Because of the shame and rejection they suffered, there was the temptation to abandon their confession and go back to Judaism. It was to keep them from doing this that the writer has gone to such lengths to show the superiority of Christ. Inasmuch as Judaism is only a shadow and not the real thing, they'd be crazy to go back to it. He's already said that. Now he adds a powerful idea—God is faithful, He keeps His promises. When it grips a person that God is faithful to His Word, it makes the believer want to be faithful to his confession of faith. If God cannot be unfaithful to us, why should we be unfaithful to Him? So he asks the Jewish Christian to cling to his confession and be willing to say publicly. . . "I have put my trust in Jesus. I know I am a child of God because He cannot lie. I know when I stand before Him in judgment, no sin will be charged against me. It was all laid on Jesus. I know that when He appears, God will openly acknowledge me as His son. Therefore, I am not ashamed to acknowledge Jesus as my Savior and Lord."

24. And let us be concerned for one another, keeping our mind busy thinking up ways to provoke one another to love and faithful works. 25. But we can't do this if we stay away from the meetings, as some

have the habit of doing. We've got to meet together in order to encourage one another, and this is all the more urgent now that we see the day of the Lord drawing near.



Those of us with younger brothers or sisters can remember how our parents would say, "You can go, but keep an eye on your little sister." It is this kind of concern that the writer has in mind for the members of the Lord's family.



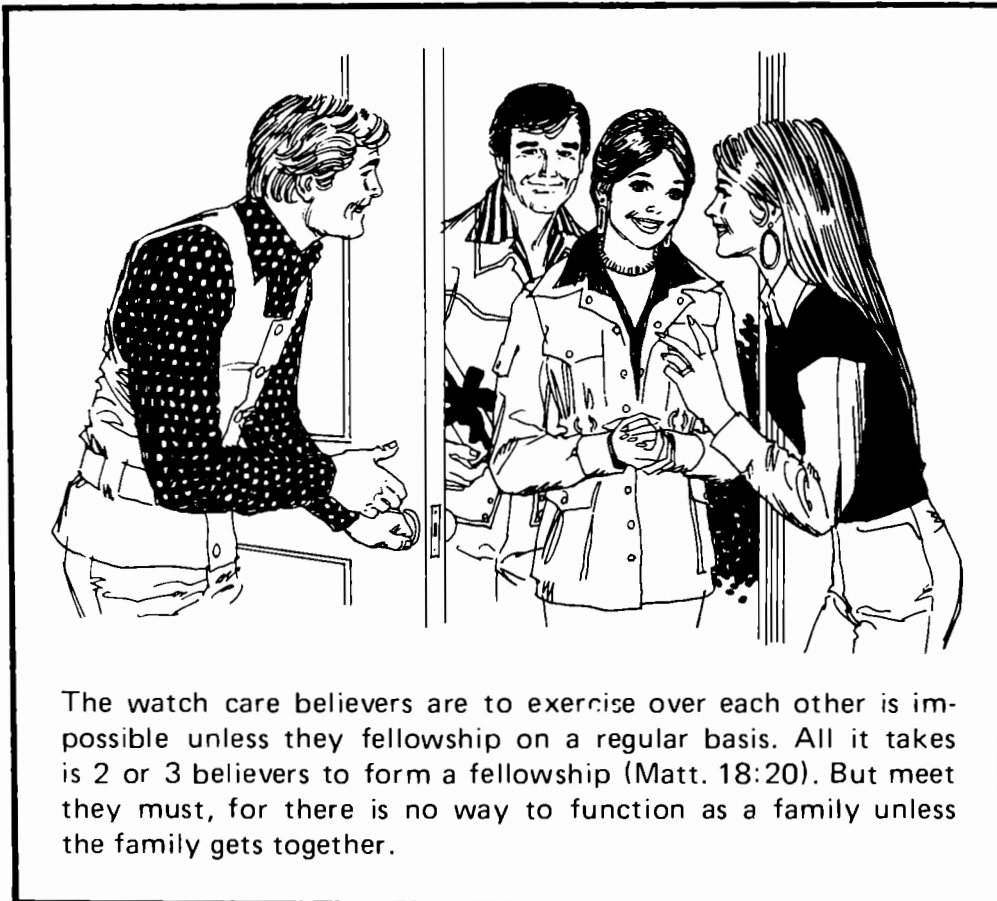
CONCERNED. Throughout the letter our writer has been asking his readers to **consider Jesus**. Here now, in the practical section, he shifts the emphasis and asks them to be concerned for each other. In Greek

the verb “concerned,” means to fix one’s eye or mind on another. Those of us with younger brothers or sisters can remember how our parents would say, “You can go, but keep an eye on your little sister.” It is this kind of concern that the writer has in mind. As members of the Lord’s family, we have just such a responsibility for each other. If we see some sign of weakness or failure, we are to jump in and do something about it. What’s more, every Christian has gifts of the Spirit. These are often buried until someone takes a personal interest and encourages a believer to get into action. All Christians have a potential which could be brought out if they were sufficiently provoked. Normally this word means to be upset or exasperated. But it can work in a positive way too. The writer is saying, because of all that Jesus has done for you, see what you can do to bring out the best in your brethren. Stop thinking about your own spiritual progress exclusively, and start thinking about what you can do to help your brethren move up in maturity. All of us can look back in our Christian lives and pick out those who prompted and provoked us to imitate their love and dedication.



MEET TOGETHER. The watch care believers are to exercise over each other is impossible unless they fellowship on a regular basis. There is no way to challenge or encourage a brother unless you meet with him. The assembly doesn’t have to be large. All it takes is 2 or 3 believers to form one (Matt. 18:20). But meet they must, for there is no way to function as a family unless the family gets together. Apparently, the early church gatherings were for the purpose of edifying and encouraging one another. They were not the “sit and listen” type programs such as we see today. They lived in troubled times. The Christians had to stick together. Believers are like coals of fire, they cease to glow when isolated from the family. So the early Christians cuddled up to keep warm. Outside the fellowship was a rough world. They needed each other. But some didn’t seem to understand this. They were beginning to get dis-

couraged over the Lord's delay in returning. So they began to forsake the Christian gatherings. Of course, they were forfeiting the very thing that would help them most, for the most powerful force that can act on a person is the influence of another. Take that out of Christianity and it goes limp. Christianity is essentially a fellowship. Sometimes a single word lovingly spoken or the example of another Christian is all a believer needs to push ahead in the Lord. But it takes fellowship to provide it. In effect, the writer is saying, "Don't stay away. You need your brethren and they need you. Inasmuch as the day of the Lord is almost upon us, we need all the fellowship we can get."



The watch care believers are to exercise over each other is impossible unless they fellowship on a regular basis. All it takes is 2 or 3 believers to form a fellowship (Matt. 18:20). But meet they must, for there is no way to function as a family unless the family gets together.



DAY/LORD. The readers of this letter were living in the hectic days prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Titus in A.D. 70. The Jewish revolt was already under way. It was only a matter of time before Rome's power would come smashing down

on the city. This meant an approaching crisis for Judaism. This meant that both Jews and Christians (the pagan world viewed Christianity as a sect of Judaism) were in for a rough time. Persecution and suffering were due to sweep the empire. Our writer apparently believed the doom of Jerusalem heralded the Lord's return. This is not surprising inasmuch as the Lord Himself spoke of the desolation of Jerusalem in almost the same breath in which He spoke of His return (Luke 21:20-28). All the early writers believed the Lord's return would be accompanied by great judgments on the earth. Therefore, it was natural for our writer to interpret the approaching destruction of Jerusalem as a sign the day of the Lord was at hand. He didn't know there would be a 1900 year span between the judgment on Jerusalem and the judgment at Armageddon. With our advantage of hindsight we can see how the desolation of Jerusalem merely PRE-FIGURED God's judgment on the day of the Lord. He simply interpreted the DAY which he could see, as the beginning of the judgment due to fall on the earth prior to the Lord's return (Matt. 24:21, 29-31). He used this approaching day as a motivating force to urge his readers to stick together and encourage one another. This is no time to be forsaking fellowship, he says. We need each other now more than ever. In our day, when the final revolt of man is at hand, and catastrophic judgment is coming, this exhortation is more urgent than ever.

THE FOURTH WARNING—vss. 26-31

26. It is obvious by now that if we persist in deliberately sinning against the truth, once we have received the whole story of what Jesus has done for us, there is no sacrifice left. 27. All we have then is the fear-filled expectation of what is going to happen to us, knowing the full fury of God's wrath is going to be poured out on all those who set themselves against Him.



SINNING. As we have observed several times before, the big sin of the book of Hebrews is forsaking Christ and returning to Judaism. The writer knows his readers are feeling the pressures of mounting persecutions and discouragements over Christ's delay. The temptation to drop out of the meetings is strong. But he senses a danger in this: if they stay away from the fellowship, it could lead some of them to forsake Christianity. That is outright rejection of Jesus. The devil, of course, is whispering, "You don't need Christianity. The temple sacrifices are sufficient for your sins. So why stick your neck out when Christ may not return at all?" For a person to listen to that suggestion, after learning from the Scriptures the real truth of Christ, and how Judaism was merely a shadow of His work, would be foolish. And to act on that suggestion would be a deliberate rejection of Jesus. So the deliberate sin of this passage is the definite rejection of Christ's atoning work. When we come to verse 29, we'll get a better idea of what he means by "deliberately sinning."



PERSIST. When the writer uses the word "persist," he indicates more precisely the kind of person he has in mind. The Greek text employs the present participle, so he is speaking of someone who is **HABITUALLY** rejecting Christ's sacrifice. This **continual rejection** lurks in the heart of a person who professes to know Christ yet has not received Him as Savior. It is **NOT** referring to those who sin after they are saved, for all Christians sin after they are saved. Most of the time that sin is **willful**. If not sins of **willful commission**, then sins of **willful omission**. Here it is the sin of rejection **AFTER** one has learned the whole story of Jesus. Thus we're back again to the controversial ground of Chapter Six. There the warning (it's the same warning actually) was based on the Spirit's working within a person and how fatal it is to reject that witness. Here in 10:10, the warning is based on Christ's perfect sacrifice and how fatal it is to reject that sacrifice. It is the continual, willful rejection of the only sacrifice which can put away sin

that the writer is referring to. To persist in this habitual rejection requires a heart of unbelief. This is a person who knows all about Jesus, yet has no personal relationship with Him. He is akin to the demons who met Jesus at Gadara. They recognized the Lord, knowing exactly Who He was. Yet they were not saved by that knowledge. Knowing Who Jesus is is one thing, acting on that knowledge is another. Until a man receives Christ, the sacrifice at Calvary has nothing to do with him. He remains an enemy of God. Clearly, the only time a person would be interested in another sacrifice, is when he doesn't want the one Jesus made for him. Has not the writer already made it clear that Christ's one perfect sacrifice put away ALL sin forever, and that no more sacrifices are needed (vss. 10, 14, 18)?



EXPECTATION. The writer's point in this warning is to cause his readers to think twice about staying away from the meetings. Note that he is careful NOT to say that any such rejectors were among his readers. He would never use the word "WE," if that were the case. He is simply telling them what a terrible thing it would be for an INFORMED believer to turn his back on Jesus. Remember: a believer is not always a receiver, nor is a professor always a possessor. To make his warning fully effective, he goes on to describe the plight of those who shun the truth of Christ. If a person didn't want Jesus' sacrifice, where would he go? Back to the blood of bulls and goats? Hardly. He knows those sacrifices have been abolished and no longer avail for sins. The informed rejector simply has no place to go—and he knows it. There is no other sacrifice for sin. It's Jesus' sacrifice or none. The man who rejects it turns his back on the only hope for eternity. Nothing is left for him but to spend the rest of his life in fear. Knowing the wrath of God hangs over unbelievers, he must go on living in terrible anticipation of God's wrath. The person who **knowingly** rejects Jesus' sacrifice, lives with the expectation of hell in his soul. What is amazing is that people can live with this fear and still not turn to Christ. We have

people like that today. They sit in churches unsaved. They learn the truth about Christ, but they will not receive the Lord and become partakers of the divine nature. It is ironic that those who refuse Him as Savior now, will meet Him as JUDGE in that day when God judges men's secrets and assigns them their place in eternity.

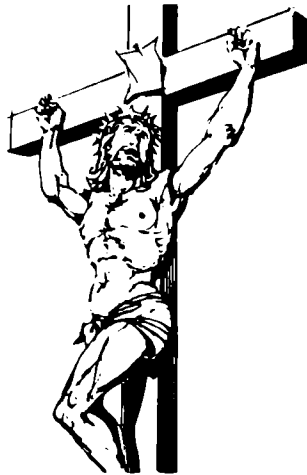
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "SIN" AND "SINS"

SACRIFICE FOR SINS



CONTINUAL SACRIFICES
for past sins only

SACRIFICE FOR SIN



ONCE FOR ALL
for all sin
past—present—future

The question will be asked, "how do we know the writer is NOT referring to Christians who sin wilfully after salvation? In answer, consider the word SINS, and then the word SIN. The Jewish sacrifices were for SINS. The evening sacrifice took care of sins committed after the morning sacrifice, and so on, in a never ending process. Jesus' sacrifice was NOT for sins, but for ALL SIN! Whereas the Jewish sacrifices were continual, Jesus' was "once for all." The entire package of man's sin (from Genesis to Revelation) was laid on Christ. His sacrifice takes care of ALL sin, past, present, and future. If a person doesn't want that sacrifice, there is no other. This is why the writer said, "When God forgives all sin and forgets it, there is no longer a need for any further sacrifices" (vs. 18). This is the big truth of the book of Hebrews.

"How certain is the judgment of such a rejector?"

28. Look at it this way: anyone who defied the Law

of Moses, and was convicted on the testimony of two or three witnesses, died without mercy. 29. What then do you think will happen to that man who despises the Son of God, treats the cleansing blood of the covenant as dirt, and insults the Spirit Who offers God's grace to Him? Will not his punishment be more severe?



DEFIED. Earlier in the letter the author made it clear that it was a greater offense to shun the saving message of Christ than to defy the Law of Moses (2:2). He now makes the same comparison. This time he does so in the light of what he has just taught his readers. He has told them that those who deliberately abandon the only sacrifice for sin, forsake all hope of salvation. It's either Christ's sacrifice or none. Now he asks his readers to decide who has the greater guilt: (1) the man who despised Moses' Law, or (2) the one who has heard the whole truth of Christ, yet for selfish reasons, turns his back on Jesus and returns to Judaism? Under the old covenant, the man who ignored the Law and went after other gods to worship them, was stoned to death. **The penalty was physical death.** But under the New Covenant, the sin of rejection is greater, because the knowledge is greater. The greater the knowledge, the greater the condemnation. Now that Jesus has come, knowledge is greater for the revelation of God is complete. The whole story of what God is like and what He wants is out. The person who knowingly rejects Jesus, rejects the unspeakable gift of God Himself. Therefore, the penalty has to be greater—and it is—it's **spiritual death**. When we read the author's description of this sin, we become convinced the **deliberate sinner** of which he speaks, is NOT merely a backslider, as some interpreters claim, but someone who despises the PERSON of God.



DESPISES. Not many writers describe the sin of rejection as graphically as does our writer in vs. 29. These are some of the strongest words in the

N.T. They give us a clear picture of what the author means by "deliberately sinning." Until Jesus came, sin was a matter of breaking the Law, i.e., this rule or that rule. But once Jesus comes into the world and reveals the Father's desperate love for man, sin is no longer a matter of the different ways people break the law, but what they do with God Himself. God is in love with man. The cross shows how desperately. When you love someone, you put your heart on the line. You leave yourself open to be hurt. Your heart is out there where it can get stepped on. Loving man as He does, God has poured out His heart. But people can reject His love and stomp on His heart. To despise that sacred heart has to be the worst crime of all. Here's how our writer describes this sin: (1) he calls it utter contempt for the Son of God. The rejector walks contemptuously all over the heart of Jesus, (2) the rejector regards Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as a worthless thing, no better than garbage, (3) he contemptuously ignores the presence of the Holy Spirit, turning a deaf ear to His pleas. Believe it or not, God actually begs people to come to Him and let Him love them. The Spirit of God pleads with men to let Him forgive them. To despise this pleading of a loving God is sin at its worst. Breaking the Law of Moses doesn't begin to compare with it. When you weigh these three specifics, it is plain the author is not referring to any backslider. Even a backslider realizes Jesus loves him and certainly feels no contempt for Him. The blood is still precious to him, and he doesn't despise God for trying to reach him through His Spirit. No, this is someone who knows the truth, but has finally turned against the Lord in contempt. Contempt is the key element.

30. For the One we know and love said, "Vengeance belongs to Me, I will square all accounts." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." 31. Therefore, it is a terrifying thing to reject Jesus' sacrifice and fall into the hands of the living God!



VENGEANCE. To emphasize the certainty of judgment for a **deliberate sinner**, the writer draws two quotations from the O.T. Both are in Deut. 32. The first of the quotations, "Vengeance belongs to Me," stresses the fact that no enemy of God is going to escape the wrath of God (vs. 35). Anyone who stomps on God's heart is clearly an enemy. The second quote, "The Lord will judge His people," indicates that God is able to distinguish between the true and false believers, even though they are mixed together as a congregation of the Lord (vs. 36). No matter how religious a man appears outwardly, God reads his heart and judges accordingly. He knows those who love Him and those who don't, regardless of their profession of faith. While the Gospel reveals God as loving and forgiving, He has a fierce side to Him. He is a sin-hating God. Those who reject His love and sacrifice must bear His hatred for sin. This is **how** He takes vengeance on the rejectors—by letting them **die in their sins**. (John 8:24). When we learn what it means to die in one's sins, we see that it is vengeance indeed. There are degrees of hell, just as there are degrees of reward in heaven. The extent of one's suffering in hell will be in accordance with the measure of evil in his life. To die with a jealous nature for example, means that in hell that same jealousy will run unchecked. All of the restraints of the Spirit present in this life will be removed. Evil will feed on itself. This is true of all sin, whether resentment, anger, greed, etc. There will not be one drop of satisfaction in hell. This is why the writer says it is such a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Since He is a **JUST** God, He must see to it that those without a sacrifice for their sins, bear the full penalty themselves!

"Wow! Won't such a warning discourage his readers?"

32. Don't forget those wonderful days when you first received the saving knowledge of Christ. Remember how you faced up to all the persecution which came against you so soon afterwards, and how you stood

firm in the faith. 33. Some of that persecution saw you publicly insulted and abused. At other times you suffered scorn because you elected to step in and be identified with those who were suffering similar abuse for Jesus' sake. 34. Not only did you openly sympathize with those who were thrown into prison, but when your own possessions were seized you bore the loss gladly, knowing a richer and more lasting treasure awaited you in heaven.



REMEMBER. Aware that his fierce warning could put fear into the hearts of his readers, the writer hastens to comfort them. The last thing in the world he wants to do is discourage them. He wants them to understand that he doesn't believe that any of them are among those who would despise the Son of God and His sacrifice on the cross. At the same time though, he wants them to realize what a terrible thing it is to turn their backs, **IN ANY DEGREE**, on the truths that have been revealed to them. He will end this chapter by saying he is confident that all of them are saved and know it. To bring them the encouragement they need, he asks them to think back to the time when they were first saved. In those days, they were so excited about Jesus and their new found faith, they gladly suffered all kinds of ridicule and abuse and were thrilled to do so. Even when the attacks didn't come against them directly, they willingly jumped in and became identified with those who were arrested and put to shame. And when their own possessions were plundered and confiscated, they were so proud to belong to Jesus, they ignored the loss and counted it a privilege to suffer for His sake. Now all that bravery and loyalty to Christ in those early days earned them a great reward. Since they are again facing rough times, the author asks them to recall their former confidence. He knows that the memory of it can stir renewed courage.

35. So this is no time to throw away your confidence.

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You've come too far and your reward is too close for you to do that. 36. Of course you still need patience and perseverance if you want to win the prize God has promised those who do His will.



The Christian life is like a race, a person has to keep pressing on in order to win the prize. The writer encourages them (and us) to keep their confidence by reminding them of the rewards they have **already** earned. Don't throw in the towel now, he says, you're too close to receiving what you have earned.



STILL NEED. Thinking of the great reward his readers had earned in the early days of their salvation, the writer says, "This is no time to throw away your confidence." To his mind it would be stupid for them to abandon what they had already won by standing up for Jesus in those days. Now that reward, which is called the "prophets' reward," is worth keeping. Jesus mentioned it to His disciples, "Blessed are you when men hate you, ostracize you and heap insults on you. . .for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets" (Luke 6:22,23). This is the "great reward" he doesn't want them to forfeit by throwing away their confidence. You see it is possible for a person to **LOSE** his reward after he has once earned it. All he has to do is draw back from his stand of living for Jesus and start living for himself, taking up again the ways of the world. The apostle John warns, "Hold fast what you have that no one take your crown" (Rev. 3:11). See, it is possible for a man to lose his crown or reward (Matt. 25:29). The Christian life is like a race, a person has to keep pressing on in order to win the prize. No runner can go backwards and win. It is also clear that the writer is not speaking of salvation at this point, but of rewards. For no one is even in the race until he is saved. Only Christians can compete for the rewards. By reminding his readers of the rewards they have **already** earned, the writer encourages them to keep their confidence. Don't throw in the towel now, he says, you're too close to receiving what you have earned. However, there could be tough days ahead so you need all the patience and perseverance you can muster in order to stand fast.

37. Therefore consider this Scripture:

**"Just a little longer now,
and He Who is coming, will come.
He will not put it off.**

38. In the meantime My righteous ones

are to trust Me and live.
But if anyone draws back,
I will be very unhappy with him."

39. Praise God we're not among those who shrink back and are lost. We trust the Lord with the kind of faith that insures the final salvation of our souls.



SCRIPTURE. To strengthen his exhortation to keep up their courage, the author quotes an O.T. prophecy. In a rather free style he takes the words of Habakkuk 2:3,4 and makes them read something like this: "Hang in there brethren, be patient for a little while longer. The Lord is coming sooner than you think, and you won't be sorry if you stand up for Him and serve Him all the way to the end." Now the quotation doesn't read like that, for the ancient prophet was raising the hopes of Israel by telling the people that God was due to show up any moment to deliver His people from their enemies. But the writer feels free in making the same words apply to the imminent return of the Lord Jesus. The gist of his words are, "Jesus is coming soon, so this is no time to give up." Such a thought drawn from Scripture would definitely encourage the readers. But the words of Habakkuk also reinforce what the writer said earlier about those who turn away from Jesus (Heb. 6:4-6). God says, "I will be very unhappy with that man," which means he will be allowed to go into perdition and be lost. Finally the writer delivers the most encouraging words of all. He assured his readers that both he and they are NOT in the same category with those who despise the Lord and turn away from Him. Instead, he says, "We trust the Lord with the kind of faith that insures the salvation of our souls." The final stage of salvation, of course, is the great hope of the Christian—appearing with Jesus when He is revealed to the world as the King of Kings. The Holy Spirit, Who is received by faith, is Himself the "guarantee" that all true believers will receive the final salvation of their souls (Eph. 1:13,14).

* * * * *

Our writer has accomplished his purpose in writing this letter. He has proved the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. He could stop right here, but think what that would have done to his readers. As Hebrew Christians, it would make them feel that the faith of their fathers was a meaningless thing; that the faith they formerly had in the promises of God was wiped out now that they had turned to Jesus. This is not true and he means to show why. There is NO DIFFERENCE between the faith of the Old Testament saints and N.T. believers. It would be important to a Jewish Christian to realize that the history of Israel was not discredited by the gospel. Therefore, the writer is going to pause for a moment to show how the faith of the O.T. heroes (prophets, martyrs and patriarchs) is identical with faith in Jesus. It is the SAME faith. This is important to see. In the next chapter he will bring before them a list of heroes of the Jewish faith, and show how they were approved by God. Before he can exhort his readers to "RUN WITH PATIENCE the race that is set before them," which he will do in Chapter 12, he wants them to see how these O.T. saints had nothing but God's promises upon which to rest. Yet they committed their entire lives to God on the proposition that He would do as promised. If they could do it, his readers, who have better promises and a more complete revelation, should be able to also. What's more, he wants them to see that they are at the end of a long line of people of whom God is very proud.

* * * * *

"What exactly does the writer mean when he speaks of trusting the Lord?"

11

1. What is faith, you ask? Well, it is an inner assurance that the things we hope for actually exist, and the conviction that they are already ours even though we cannot see them.



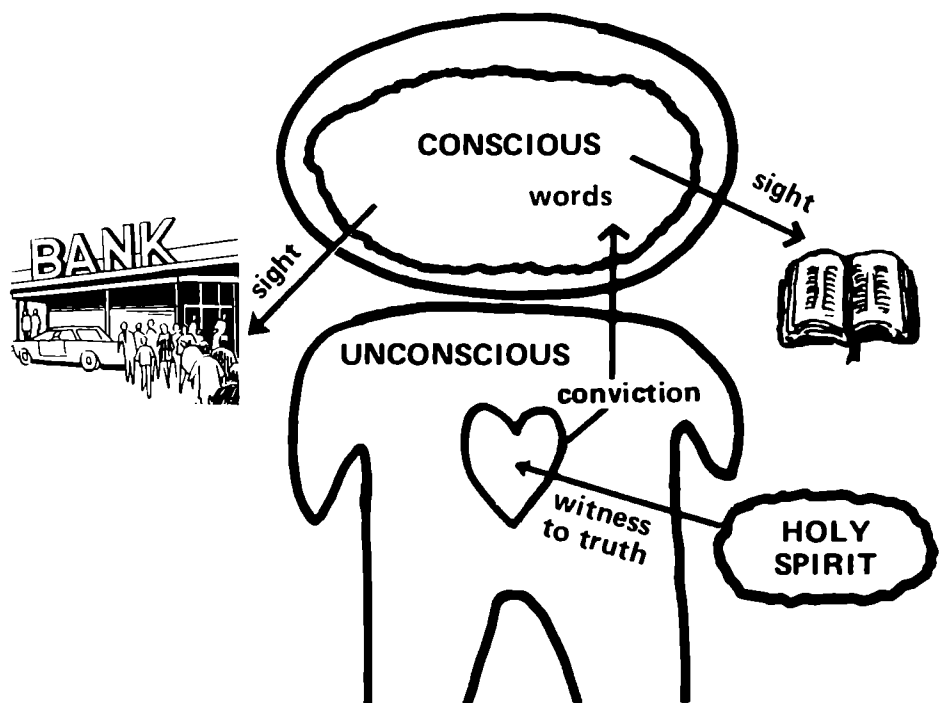
FAITH. Though we have come to a new chapter, there is NO shift in the writer's thinking. He still has but one thing in mind—keep these dear brothers pressing on in Christ. To encourage them, he is going to list the heroes in God's hall of fame. To do that, however, he must first show that there is no difference between Old Testament faith and the one who trusts in Jesus. So he pauses for a moment to talk about faith itself. When he has done that, it will be clear that faith is a HUMAN quality. It belongs to this life only. No one in heaven needs faith, for we walk by sight there. The man who drops a letter in the mailbox must TRUST the postal service to deliver it. The man who boards a plane, trusts his life to the skill of the pilot. Every man who puts money in the bank, places his trust in that bank. He can't see his money, but he knows, by faith, that it is still his. Ask him how much he has and he will say, X dollars, even though the money is NOT in his pocket. He doesn't say I HOPE I have X dollars; he says I HAVE it. This is exactly what our author means by faith. The man who is saved exercises THAT SAME faith in Jesus. He can't see the Lord, but ask him if he is saved and he will not say, "I HOPE SO." Instead, he will confidently say, "I KNOW I have eternal life! He has an assurance within himself that his salvation is in his pocket right now. The O.T. saints had precisely this kind of faith, with only the promises of God to rest upon. That's why their example is so powerful.



CONVICTION. The man who puts his money in a bank has reasonable knowledge about the bank. He can study its financial condition and performance record. Besides, all accounts are insured by a government agency. How can one's confidence in a bank be compared to confidence in an unseen Lord? The truth is we have an equally solid basis for trusting in Jesus. We have knowledge about Christ that is as valid as a bank report. How does a person acquire this knowledge so as to have the same conviction he might have concerning a bank? First

he hears about Jesus. He may read it in the Bible or someone may tell it to him. Then, as he hears the truth, the "Spirit of Truth," bears witness to his heart that what he is hearing is true. From within himself arises the **conviction** that what he has learned is solid fact. He is

THE SOURCE OF CONVICTION



The man who puts his trust in a bank, is dealing with things which can be seen. The evidence is **external**. He can satisfy himself about its soundness, and make a decision. But the man who would believe God, is dealing with UNSEEN things most of which have not happened as yet. There is NO visible evidence. True, the Bible is available, but using the Bible to prove the Bible isn't satisfactory. Ah, but there is One Who testifies to the truth of the Bible's statements—the Holy Spirit. When a person reads the Bible, the words register in his CONSCIOUS MIND. But that doesn't make him believe them. As he reads, however, the Spirit of Truth simultaneously witnesses to his heart (UNCONSCIOUS MIND) that what he is reading is true. Then a CONVICTION arises from **within himself** that the Bible is true and he can ACT on it without hesitation. This INTERNAL evidence for trusting in the WORD of God is as solid and valid as any external evidence for trusting in a bank. The **source** of conviction, therefore, is the Holy Spirit as He backs up the claims of the Bible. To reject this evidence is to reject the Spirit of God.

then free to ACT on that knowledge; free to put his trust in Jesus. Once a man places his faith in the Lord, the fact that he has done so is proof that he has received the Spirit's witness. Jesus made it clear that no one could do this apart from the Spirit (John 6:44). Some scholars translate the Gk. word for "assurance" as "title-deed." Used in that sense, a person's faith becomes a GUARANTEE of ownership. He knows that all things offered in Christ are his possessions, even though he cannot see them as yet. The **convictions** we have concerning all that God has promised us, are PROOF that we already have title to them. Why? That conviction is generated by the Holy Spirit.

2. It was by means of this kind of faith that men of old won God's approval and had their names written into the permanent record.



MEN OF OLD. Having explained to his readers exactly what faith is and how it works, he now says that the heroes of the Jewish faith who went before them, had this SAME kind of faith. Thus they learn there is no difference between O.T. faith and N.T. faith. There is only ONE KIND of faith for salvation whether N.T. or O.T. If his readers become convinced of this, they will see themselves at the end of a long line of heroes and will want to stay in the race. He knows how hard it is for them to remain true to Christ in the face of the ridicule and contempt they are suffering on account of Him. But it will be easier for them if they can see that the saints of old were in the SAME RACE and chose to suffer rather than give up the faith. Suffering is not new to men of faith, as the writer will point out. ALL believers should understand that when they put their trust in Jesus, they are taking a stand against the world. That means they can expect pain, and loss, and unpopularity. Obviously it would be easier and more comfortable to follow the ways of the world. But to the man of faith, it is better to suffer with Jesus than to prosper in the world. The Christian attitude is that

there is no way to lose by trusting in the Lord, no matter how rough things get. Each of the famous names he will mention refused what the world considers to be greatness, and staked all they had on the promises of God. The writer believes that if his readers can see the connection between themselves and those in God's hall of fame, they will be proud to be a part of such celebrated company.

3. To go further, it is by this same kind of faith that we understand that everything in space and time was fashioned by the Word of God, so that the things which we can see were made out of things we cannot see.



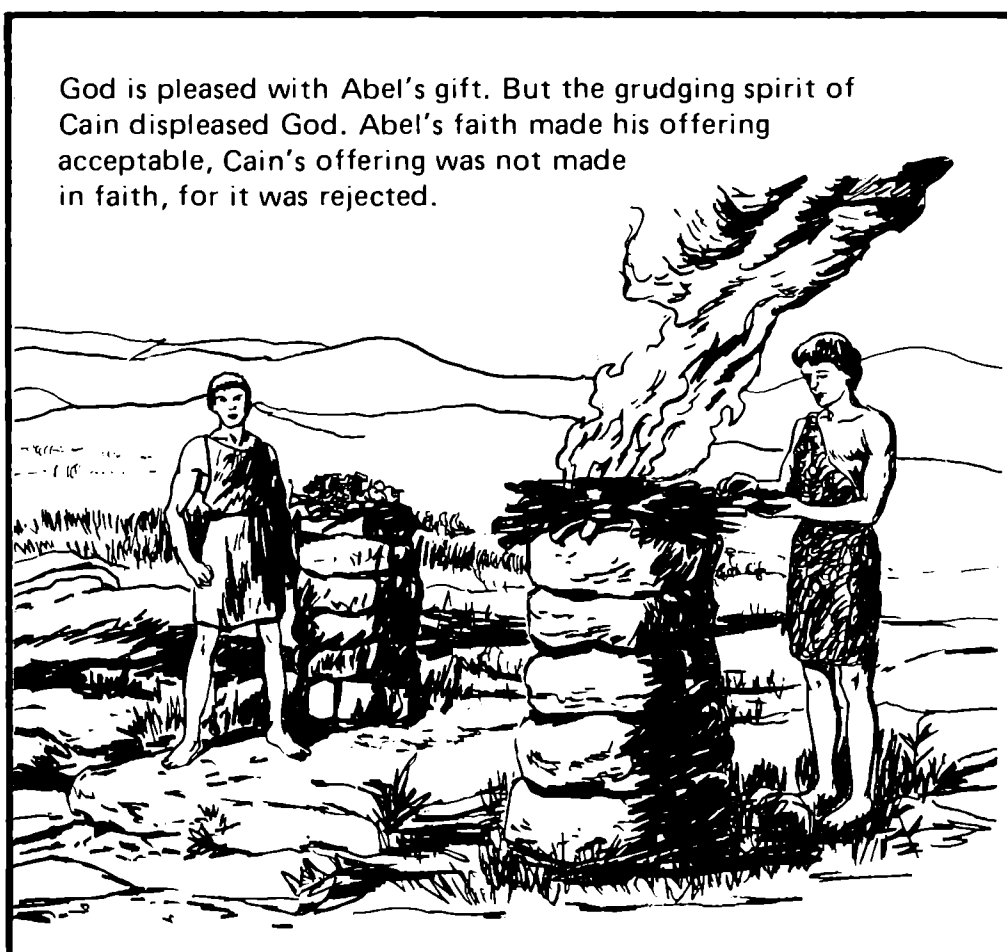
CANNOT SEE. Is our author taking too much for granted when he says "we understand" that the visible world was made out of the invisible? How many today understand that? Some even think this visible world is eternal. The writer says that God merely SPOKE and the entire universe appeared, made out of things we cannot see. That means this physical world is a manifestation of something unseen. The apostle Paul assures us that this world is temporary when he says, ". . . the things which are seen are TEMPORAL, and the things which are NOT SEEN are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). In the days of our author, it was popular to believe that God made the world out of existing matter, rather than out of nothing. But that idea is laid to rest when he says it is made out of unseen things. This is easier to believe today. Nuclear physics proves that what appears to us as matter is made entirely of spinning bits of energy; that which appears as solid matter is made entirely of non-material energy. Thus it should be easier now to believe that God made this world out of nothing. If a man can believe that, it helps him to accept the idea that God is in complete control of everything that happens to His people. We need that understanding. One of the hardest things to fathom is the suffering of God's own people. If He is so powerful, why do the godly suffer and the

ungodly prosper? To the man of faith the answer is: since God is in command of everything, all suffering must somehow be a part of His plan. Along with the suffering of His people is the promise that suffering is the road to glory. i.e., "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). With such a promise we can bear the suffering. Why? If God can cause a universe to spring out of nothing simply by His Word, must not His promises come to pass by the SAME POWER? The promises of God are also the Word of God. His Word must be fulfilled.

"Will our writer give us some examples of faithful believers?"

ABEL

4. The sacrifice which Abel offered was more pleasing to God than Cain's because it was offered in faith.



When God accepted Abel's gift, it was proof that he had won God's approval and was accepted by Him as a righteous man. And now, even though he is dead, Abel still speaks to us about trusting God.



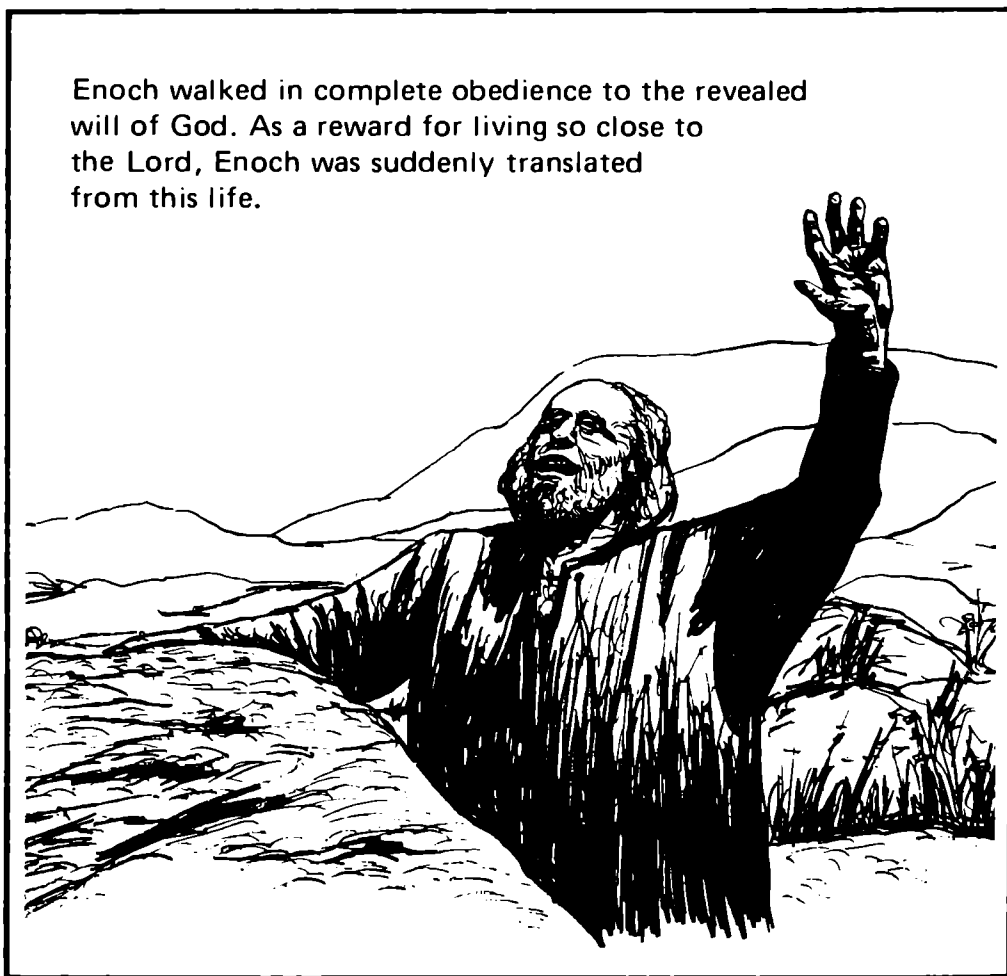
ABEL. Having explained that there is no difference between O.T. and N.T. faith, the writer starts down the honor roll. The first person he mentions is Abel. His story, found in Genesis 4:1-15 is a strange one. Abel was a shepherd. His brother Cain, a farmer. Both worshipped the SAME God. We're not told HOW God revealed Himself to the brothers, or how He made His will known to them. But somehow He did and they both knew exactly what was required of them. The time came when they were to approach God with an offering. Abel brought a lamb from his flock, Cain some produce from his fields. Abel's offering was accepted, Cain's was not. We don't know how this was done, but possibly fire from heaven consumed Abel's sacrifice. Seeing his offering left there, Cain became jealous and killed his brother in anger. Now what made Abel's offering acceptable? It was his faith. Cain's offering was obviously not made in faith, for it was rejected. It wasn't Abel's offering that made him acceptable to God, it was his faith. His offering merely represented the faith in his heart. But here is what the readers were to observe: being in God's will and enjoying His favor did NOT keep Abel's brother from killing him. Abel died because of his faith. The readers had been told that they could expect to suffer for their faith in Christ. From Abel's example, they see how it is possible to be in the center of God's will and still suffer. With Abel's story a part of the permanent record, his life still speaks to readers everywhere telling them that the faith life can be rough, yet all that finally matters is the approval of God.

ENOCH

5. It was because of his faith that Enoch was taken up into heaven without having to go through the exper-

ience of death. One moment he was present, the next instant he was gone because God took him. However, before he was translated it was said of him that he was a God-pleaser. 6. Whether Enoch or anyone else, it is impossible to please God without faith. Therefore those who would come to Him to worship Him must truly believe that He exists and that He longs to reward those who seek Him.

Enoch walked in complete obedience to the revealed will of God. As a reward for living so close to the Lord, Enoch was suddenly translated from this life.



ENOCH. Whereas Abel died for his faith, Enoch didn't die at all. The story of this hero is found in Genesis 5. If we turn to that account, we find that Enoch **WALKED** with God. Now two people cannot walk together unless they are in complete agreement. Therefore we conclude that Enoch walked in complete obedience to the revealed will of God. What joy he must have brought to God's heart, how thrilling this must have been for God. **As a reward** for living so close to the Lord,

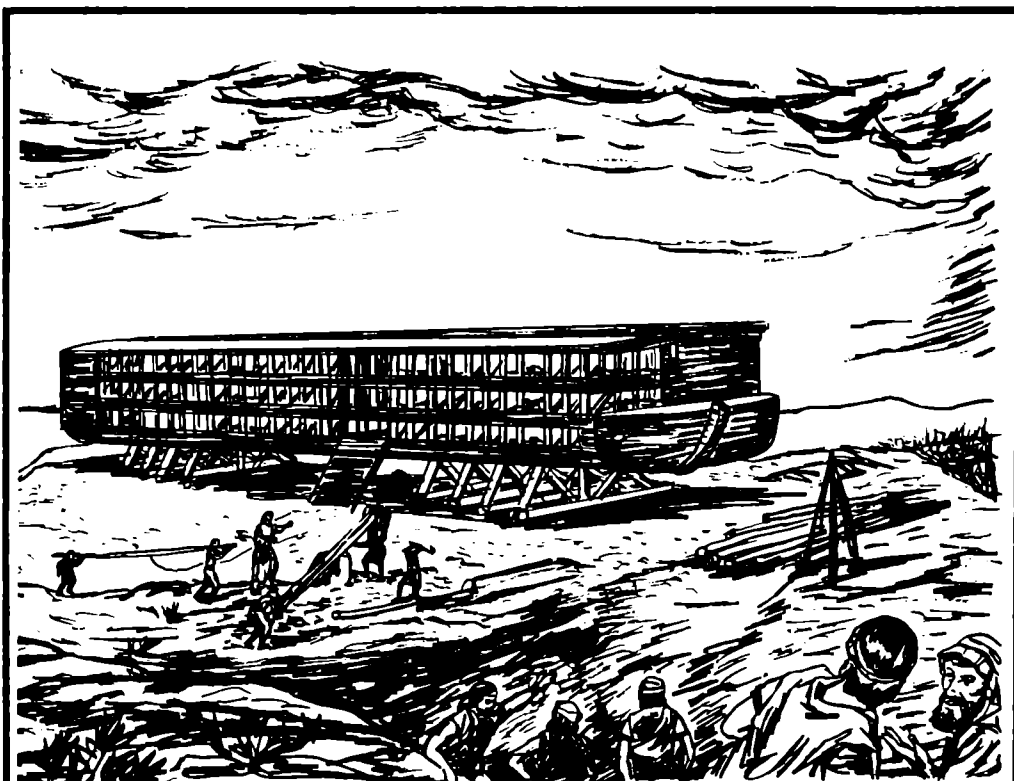
Enoch was suddenly translated from this life. One moment he was here, the next moment he was gone! He avoided the experience of physical death which terrorizes so many. With Scripture emphasizing the fact that Enoch PLEASED God, the writer goes on to say that no one, including Enoch, can please God apart from faith. Therefore, he is saying that Enoch was a man of faith; and that it was his great faith which brought so much pleasure to God. Then the writer states two foundation acts of faith which apply, not only to Enoch, but anyone who would worship God; (1) a person must believe that He exists, (2) that it pays to seek Him for He longs to reward those who serve Him. The writer knew his readers wanted to please God. What they must see is that they cannot do it apart from faith. They **must** keep their faith solid in Jesus. If they do, they can expect God to reward them. The whole point of the Enoch story is that it PAYS to believe God and go all the way with Him. Observe that Enoch was not only made righteous by His faith, which is an eternal blessing, but he was also rewarded in THIS LIFE. His rapture (surely we can call it that) was a reward for staying close to the Lord and living to please Him. O that we could learn to put Jesus first in everything.

NOAH

7. Noah was another with this kind of faith. When he received God's warnings of impending doom he believed Him. Alarmed, he went to work to build an ark. This act of faith saved his whole family. By his faith, Noah condemned the unbelief of the rest of the world and gained for himself righteousness in the sight of God.



NOAH. The next hero is a man who took God at His Word even though what He promised seemed impossible. In Noah's day mankind was so wicked, God purposed to wipe out the entire population. Three



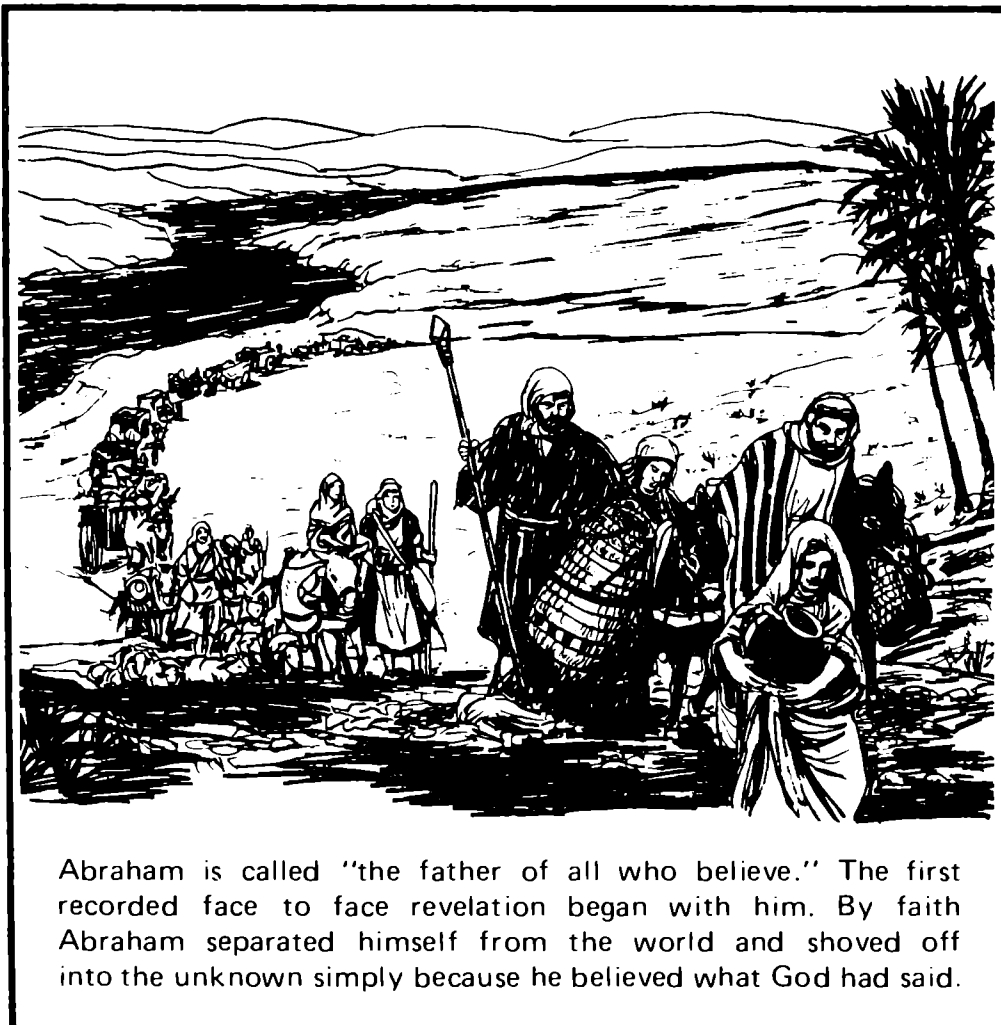
Noah obeyed God and set to work building an ark according to the directions given him. Imagine the ridicule Noah suffered throughout the 120 years it took to build it. But he didn't waver in faith and escaped the destruction that came upon the world.

chapters in Genesis are devoted to how Noah found grace in God's sight and how the Lord revealed His plan to wipe out man with a flood. Though it hadn't even rained on the earth as yet, Noah believed this incredible revelation. He set out to build a huge ship in the middle of the desert, miles from any sea or water. Imagine the ridicule this man suffered throughout the 120 years it took to build the ark. His friends must have thought him mad. People journeyed miles to see the monstrosity in the desert. But Noah didn't waver in faith. As we all know, he and his family escaped the destruction that came upon the world. So Noah was another who was rewarded in **THIS LIFE** for his faith, as well as being declared righteous before God (Genesis 7:1). Noah's faith also condemned the unbelief of the world. In a day when man wanted to forget all about God, Noah made Him the center of his life. He abandoned the world be-

cause God's message meant more to him than anything else. What a lesson for the readers. They were suffering ridicule for their faith in Christ. How comforting to learn from Noah's example that having the approval of God often means having to stand against the world. It is also precious to behold God delivering His people as well as giving them eternal life through Christ. In the closing days of this age, believers may again be preserved through trial because of their obedience to the Word of God.

ABRAHAM

8. Acting on faith alone, Abraham obeyed the call of God when told to leave his own country and go into a land which God promised to give him. Without any idea as to where he was going, this man left the security of his home to follow the leading of God.



Abraham is called "the father of all who believe." The first recorded face to face revelation began with him. By faith Abraham separated himself from the world and shoved off into the unknown simply because he believed what God had said.



ABRAHAM. So special is the place that Abraham occupies in God's program for redeeming men, that he is called, "the father of all who believe." Inasmuch as we do not know how God revealed Himself to Abel, Enoch and Noah, we can say the first recorded **face to face revelation** began with Abraham. It is with him that we learn that faith in God's Word makes a person righteous in God's sight. His plan for saving people became evident with Abraham. It was announced that the gathering of the family of faith would begin with the call to Abraham to separate himself from the world and live only on the promises of God. As we watch this man trust God, we learn how faith works. We see why he is the supreme example of faith for all time. God appeared to Abraham as he lived in the pagan city of Ur in Mesopotamia. He told him he was going to take him and make of him a huge blessing to the entire world. But to do this it would be necessary for him to leave his homeland and journey to a place God would show him later on. By faith, this dear man put his family, friends, business, career and security behind him and plunged into the desert, not knowing where this step of faith would take him. As far as he was concerned, his life was in God's hands. He shoved off into the unknown simply because he believed what God had said. What faith that must have taken. No wonder God was so pleased with him. But that was just his first step of faith.

9. Finally, when Abraham arrived in the land which was promised to him, he lived in it by faith. Since he didn't own a foot of it, he had to wander about dwelling in tents, along with Isaac and Jacob, who in turn, received the same promise from God. 10. Actually though, Abraham was just passing through this world. He was really waiting for God to bring him into that city which has foundations, whose designer and builder is God Himself.



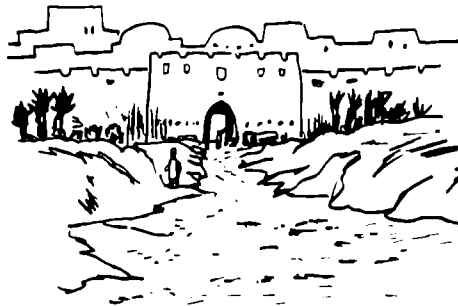
ARRIVED. When Abraham reached the promised land, none of it was his, except a grave site which he bought from the inhabitants. Though it was all

TENTS VERSUS THE CITY

TENTS



CITY



The word TENTS is to be set against the word CITY. In a city the houses and buildings are constructed on foundations. That is, they are **permanent** structures. Tents, on the other hand, are temporary dwellings held by pegs in the sand. The writer is using the tent vs city comparison to contrast the **temporariness** of life on earth with the **permanent** character of God's invisible city. By faith, Abraham SAW the eternal city, the permanent home of the believer. To him that was the real world. From then on nothing earthly could satisfy him. While his body wandered about in the promised land, his soul longed for the eternal dwelling of the family of God. To him, life on earth was a pilgrim life. So he didn't mind sojourning in Palestine while he waited for God to bring him to the real home in heaven.

his **by promise**, he had to live in it as an alien. What a test after having been assured by God that the land was his. Often it is harder to WAIT on God than it is to WORK for Him. Abraham had to wait **ten years** even before God gave him the next step in the plan. It must have been rough to come into the land and have nothing happen. Yet Abraham didn't waver in faith. The enthusiasm that was his when he first left Ur, stayed with him. His faith burned brightest when there was nothing to do but wait. How could that be? Ah, Abraham's expectations went beyond a piece of real estate. Apparently the original promise to him contained the idea of God's eternal family, the company of the redeemed. He must have

been told that he would play a key role in bringing it into being. Along with that revelation, must have come some instruction concerning the fellowship God had planned for those who come to Him by faith. We gather this from Jesus' own words, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day!" (John 8:56). There—that was the secret of Abraham's patience. He SAW, by faith, the future fellowship that the people of God were to enjoy. Our writer says that Abraham saw a CITY, a celestial city that God had built for His people. With the eye of faith fixed on that city, he was ready to abandon this world and live on the promises of God. Recall the opening verses of this chapter which defined faith as the conviction of unseen things? Our writer is showing us that Abraham had that kind of conviction. Because of it he was able to pass the tests of this life.

SARAH

11. Sarah, too, had this kind of faith. For even though she was too old to have children, she believed God was faithful to His Word and would do for her as He had promised. As a result, she received the ability to conceive. 12. Thus it was that Abraham, even though his body was as good as dead, was able to become a father. And from him there sprang such a flood of descendants that it is impossible to count them, for they are as numerous as the stars of heaven and as numberless as the grains of sand on the seashore.



SARAH. That Sarah is included as a hero of faith bothers some readers. They do not feel she is a good example of faith, because she received the promise of God with laughter. Then there's a problem in the Gk. text. The words, "ability to conceive," refer primarily to **disposing of seed**, a male function. For that reason some scholars feel the reference is to Abraham rather than to Sarah. However, we do not as yet have the final word on the Gk. text. Besides, it seems unlikely the promise could have been fulfilled unless Sarah



Sarah's faith grew to the place where she became convinced that what seemed impossible to man, was easily possible for God. God kept His word and Isaac was born.

shared in the faith to appropriate it. And if she did, then she indeed belongs in the hall of fame. Now it's true that she laughed. So did Abraham (Genesis 17:17). He roared at the thought of a 100 year old man fathering a child. Maybe he was simply enjoying God's sense of humor, but it did seem incredulous to him at first. The laughter of both Abraham and Sarah was a natural reaction to the fantastic news God had laid on them. What is likely is that Abraham communicated his great faith to Sarah and her faith grew to the place where she became convinced that what seemed impossible to man, was easily possible for God. God kept His Word. Isaac was born. And the whole Hebrew race issued from him. What's more, hundreds of millions of Moslems trace their lineage to Abraham through Ishmael. Beyond that, think of the numberless Gentile Christians who have become "Abraham's seed," through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:29). Abraham did indeed become a father and Sarah a mother. Both of

them had to trust God for the miracle, for neither was capable of having children when God gave the promise. The birth of Isaac was a down payment on all the other promises, and as surely an evidence to Abraham as the Holy Spirit is to us (Eph. 1:13,14).

13. Now all these people lived by faith and they died in faith, because it was all they had. They never received the things God promised them. However they could see them afar off in the future and accepted that as proof that their faith was not in vain. Aware that this earth was not their real home, they considered themselves to be pilgrims and strangers who were simply passing through.



STRANGER. The point the author wishes to make is that even though the promises of God were never fulfilled in the lifetimes of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they nonetheless died with their hearts **full of faith**. It is clear from this that the promises of God went far beyond any earthly blessings and that they expected God to do all that He had promised them, even after their deaths. The patriarchs didn't care whether they inherited the land or not. Their hopes were fixed on something infinitely greater than a piece of real estate. They'd been promised a **SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE** which exceeded anything this world could offer. They viewed their lives as a journey to that inheritance. It was because of this that they gladly acknowledged themselves as pilgrims and strangers, not only in the land of Canaan, but in the whole world as well. In those days it was extremely humiliating to be a foreigner in a strange land. Strangers were always treated with suspicion and contempt. Usually they were looked upon as refugees expelled from their own land as undesirables. Yet, the patriarchs willingly gave themselves this title, because their eyes were fixed on the eternal blessings God had promised. One writer likens them to nomads crossing the desert on their way to a big city. They can see the towers in the distance, yet they know

they have to spend another night in the desert before they can reach their destination. In the same way, the patriarchs were content to live as pilgrims in Canaan, because they saw the eternal city in the distance. A few more nights or years in the “desert of Canaan” didn’t matter to them.

14. Now when people refer to themselves as strangers, it is obvious they don’t regard the land they are in as their true homeland. 15. Thus the patriarchs did not regard Canaan as their true homeland. What’s more, it never occurred to them to go back to the land they left behind. They could have, any time they wished. Therefore, it is also clear they were not forced into the pilgrim life.



GO BACK. The people of this world seek after wealth, fame and pleasure. They feel cheated and frustrated if they don’t achieve them. The only way a man can be content as a **NOBODY** and have **NOTHING** in this world, is to be headed for something better beyond this world. This was definitely the case with Abraham. He was obviously expecting something better. Abraham was raised in the sophisticated city of Ur. Modern archeology tells us that this was a great city with a highly developed culture. On top of that, the patriarch spent years at Haran, a remarkable trade center at the crossroads of the world. Now why would a prosperous city-dweller, who was used to the finer things of life, give up all that and shift to living in tents in a strange land? The only explanation is that he believed the astonishing promises of God. He wasn’t compelled to live like that. He simply took God at His Word. He could have gone back any time he wished. Nothing held him except his faith in God’s promise of something better. By faith he rested his eyes on a heavenly home and never gave up on his journey to that home. He and his son and grandson lived with this hope. They died with the expectation of reaching it. The shift Abraham made is a lesson for all believers. He teaches us, by example, that

we should not fix our eyes on this world and settle down in it as though it were our real home. It is NOT our home. We must keep our eyes on the heavenly city. That's where "our citizenship" is, says the apostle Paul (Phil. 3:20). One of the tragedies of Christianity is that many who profess to receive Christ, never get their eyes on that city. They busy themselves with their families, jobs, laboring to become comfortable and secure in this world. Too bad, too, for it is a glorious thing to catch sight of the celestial city and get ready for our place in the eternal family.

16. The truth is, these people were seeking a better country than the one they left behind. Their hearts were set on that heavenly home. And because of it, God is not ashamed to identify Himself as their Father. The nice part is, He really does have a city all prepared for them to live in.



HEAVENLY HOME. Made the image of God, man was not designed for this world. He lives in it for the purpose of testing and reaching for maturity, but it is NOT his home. The physical world is not our natural environment, we don't really belong here. As an astronaut must don a spacesuit for a journey in outer-space, so must a man put on an "earth-suit" (a physical body) in order to sojourn in this world. Even the Lord Jesus had to put on an earth-suit to dwell among men. Our true dwelling is with God. We were designed for life in the spirit-world. God is spirit, so are we (John 4:24). If God is invisible, man is also invisible. All that we see of anyone, is that which is manifested THROUGH his body. But the body is not the person. As the image of the infinite God, nothing FINITE can satisfy us. Our appetites are infinite, like God's appetite. Therefore, we can only be satisfied by God Himself. The patriarchs sensed this. That's why they embraced God's promises as they did, considering them more desirable than the best of this world. They believed God had an eternal city in which the family of God would dwell and be satisfied by Him.

Abraham saw that city by faith and gladly exchanged the world for it. He and the patriarchs set their hearts on it. It may have been the same city that was shown to the apostle John (Revelation 21). God was thrilled with their determination to have what He had promised. So pleased was He, that He honored them by saying, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). What a fantastic honor to have God call Himself by your name! How precious to consider that there is only ONE CITY for all of God's people. Those who lived before Christ are part of the same family and share the same glory as we who have received Jesus after Pentecost. Praise the Lord there is but one family, making all the saints brothers and sisters in Christ.

ABRAHAM AGAIN

17. God put Abraham's faith to its greatest test when He asked him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. This great man, to whom the promises were made, didn't waver. He was actually ready to slay his only beloved son (by Sarah) as an offering to God. 18. His willingness to do this is remarkable, for it was through this very son Isaac, that God had promised to make a great nation of Abraham. 19. This amazing man came to the conclusion that God must be able to bring people back from the dead. Therefore, when Isaac was spared, there is a sense in which Abraham received him back from the dead.



TEST. Note that Abraham is listed TWICE in God's hall of fame. This great man is worthy of the double honor. He was first written up for three specific acts of faith; (1) leaving his home to follow God's leading, (2) living as a stranger in the land that was promised to him, (3) trusting God for the birth of Isaac when it seemed impossible. Now he is honored again. This time for when his great faith was put to its severest test. That test came when God asked Abraham



Abraham was tested twice. The severest test came when God asked Abraham to slay Isaac as a sacrifice. God's command appeared to wipe out the promises, but Isaac was spared because Abraham was willing to obey God.

to slay Isaac as a sacrifice. What a demand! God had given Isaac to Abraham, making it clear that ALL the promises were to be fulfilled through him. There was no one else. Isaac was unique. He was the only son of Sarah. The Lord had said that ALL of Abraham's descendents were to come through Isaac. And now God was asking him to slay him as a sacrifice. It didn't make sense. If the nation was to come out of Isaac, and the world to be blessed by that nation, God's command appeared to wipe out the promises. But what was the patriarch to do? Whether or not he understood the reason behind the command he had no choice but to obey. What a test! Imagine being told to kill the very one through whom all the promises had to be fulfilled! Well, Abraham set out with his son and a few servants to journey to the place where he was to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God.



CONCLUSION. As Abraham pondered the dilemma, he knew there had to be a way out. After all, how could God's Word fail? He had already proved Himself to be the God of the impossible, One Who could do anything He said He would do. Therefore Abraham concluded that God **MUST HAVE** a way to keep those promises even if Isaac were slain. But **how** would He do it? Then Abraham's faith came up with a fantastic idea. "God will raise him back up after I kill him!" What makes this so amazing is that such a thing had **never happened before**. Abraham simply reasoned that God must be able to raise people from the dead. To his mind, this was the only way the command to kill Isaac could be reconciled to the promises God had given him. So he took it on faith that God would solve the dilemma by restoring Isaac to him. How do we know Abraham believed this? From what he said to the servants as he ordered them to wait at the foot of the mountain. "You men wait here while the lad and I go yonder, and **WE WILL** come back to you" (Genesis 22:5). See—his faith had already triumphed over the dilemma. He was ready to carry out God's command. His faith saw a way out of the impossible situation. What lessons we learn from this great man. Into all of our lives there come tests which seem to defy explanation. Many of us ask, "Why me, Lord?" Sometimes it doesn't make sense at all. We must then do as Abraham did, trust God to know what He is doing. We also see that God doesn't hesitate to ask for things which are near and dear to us. Yet if we truly believe He loves us enough to die for us, and seeks only to bless us, we will willingly give up anything He asks of us. When that time comes, it helps to think of Abraham and what was asked of him. Our test may not seem so rough then.



FROM THE DEAD. We don't know how old Isaac was at this time. Some authorities say he was 23, but the Genesis account gives the impression that he was just a lad. In any event, it appears that he cooper-

ated with his father, perhaps going so far as to climb up on the altar. He undoubtedly heard his father say to the servants, "The lad and I will return." He probably believed those words himself. So we find him on the altar with a knife in Abraham's hand, about to be plunged into his heart. Then God intervened. He stayed Abraham's hand in midair, sparing him the pain that He did not spare Himself. God told Abraham NOT to kill the boy, but to offer a ram that was caught in a nearby thicket. Thus Isaac was delivered from the very jaws of death. Now the lad was as good as dead. His father fully intended to drive that knife through his heart. Therefore, there is a sense in which Isaac was returned to his father from the dead. It's true, of course, that God could have allowed Abraham to slay his son and then raise him up again. But obviously God is not going to accept any human sacrifice, other than HIS only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus. Consider again the faith of this man. To believe that God could raise people from the dead was one thing; to back that faith by slaying your own son was something else. To my mind, this has to be the most outstanding act of faith in the Bible.

ISAAC, JACOB AND JOSEPH

20. It was by faith that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, and predicted what was going to happen to them. 21. Just before he died, Jacob leaned on top of his staff and worshipped God. Then by faith, he blessed each of Joseph's sons. 22. Joseph himself, when he came to the end of his life, predicted by faith, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and made them promise to take his bones with them when they left.



ISAAC. In the verses above we have three men who are linked together by the way their faith glowed at the time of death. Just before they died, each made powerful predictions which showed their faith in the promises of God. Yet all of them died without seeing any of those promises fulfilled. Those promises you



Once Isaac discovered that he had unwittingly passed the blessing on to Jacob, he recognized it was God's will for Jacob to be the heir to all the promises of God.

recall, which were first made to Abraham, were three-fold; (1) they were to become a great nation, (2) they would have their own land, (3) and out of the nation was to come a blessing to the entire world. All of these things were hundreds of years in the future, yet these men displayed remarkable faith in them when it came time for them to pass the blessing on to their heirs. The first is Isaac. He seemingly led an uneventful life, with no high points of faith mentioned anywhere until it is time for him to die. Even then, he almost appears to be a failure. He wanted to give the blessing to his older son Esau. That would have been the natural order. But it was not God's will. Nothing is said about the fact that Isaac had to be tricked into giving the blessing to Jacob. But it is clear that once he discovered that he had unwittingly passed the blessing on to Jacob, he recognized it was God's will for Jacob to be the heir. Instead of trying to revoke the blessing he said, "Yes, and he shall be blessed." But Esau was not left out entirely. Isaac gave him a lesser blessing

and he became the father of the Edomites. The action that was so commendable on Isaac's part was that he blessed both of the boys on the basis that God would keep His Word and that they would have a place in His plans.



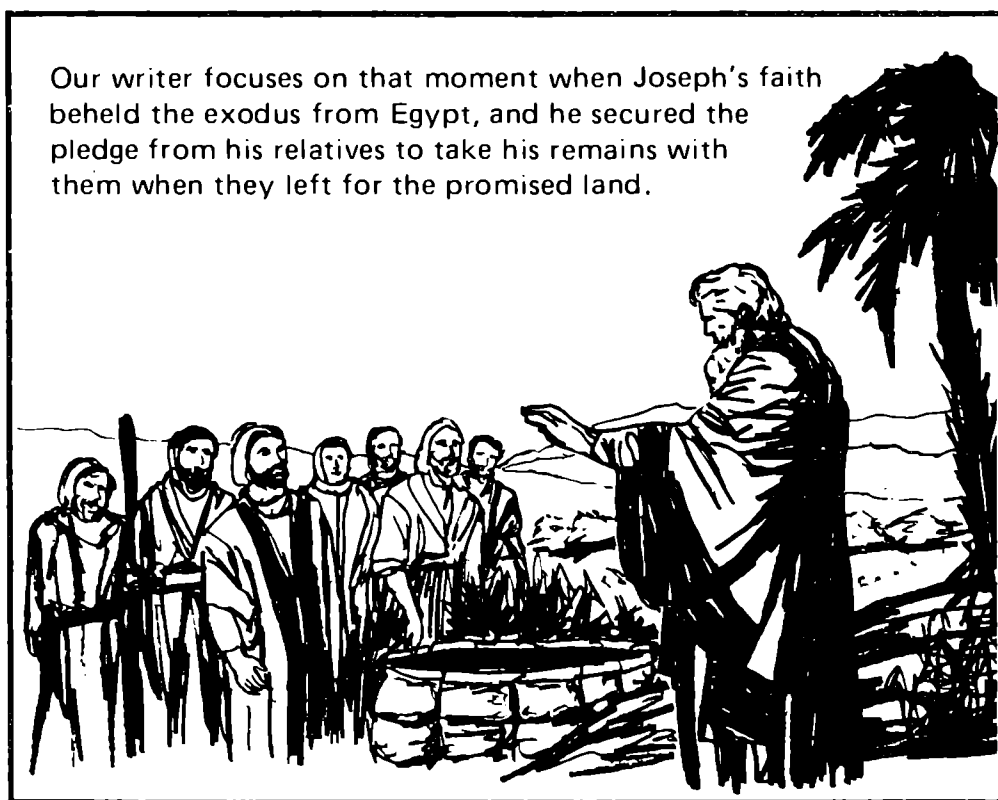
As death was approaching Jacob, he made Joseph promise to bury him in the land of Canaan. By faith he also could see Joseph's two sons becoming leaders of tribes in Israel.




JACOB. When it is Jacob's turn to be written up, the writer brushes past the feeble struggles of his faith during his life and zeros in on the brightness of it at his death. This man had been a schemer all of his life. He lived by his wits rather than complete trust in God. But the years mellowed him. Finally he came to the place where he was no longer self-sufficient. And at the end of his days we find him down in Egypt, miles away from the promised land. As death was coming upon him, he summoned his son Joseph, then the Prime Minister of Egypt. He made him promise to bury him in the land of Canaan. At this point, all that mattered to him were God's promises. He now saw them clearly. As soon as Joseph gave his word, the old man sat on the edge of his bed, bowed himself on his staff or cane, and

worshipped God. What a changed man! What a picture he made! There he was, dying, blessing, worshipping and leaning on God's Word. God had done a great work in him to get him ready for this portrait. Then Joseph's two sons were brought to him. He blessed them, stating that they should have a part in the promised land. What could be more unlikely than princes of Egypt becoming leaders of tribes in Israel! By faith he could see that the younger son, Ephraim, had the larger place in God's plan, and he blessed the younger above the elder. Now Jacob did this hundreds of years before it came to pass. He knew the blessing of God was upon him. It was carried out by God later on, exactly as Jacob had predicted. This is remarkable when you consider it was all by faith in the promises that God had made to Abraham. No wonder he was listed in the hall of fame!

Our writer focuses on that moment when Joseph's faith beheld the exodus from Egypt, and he secured the pledge from his relatives to take his remains with them when they left for the promised land.



 **JOSEPH.** When Joseph came to the end of his days, his faith in God's promises burned as brightly as his father's. When Jacob told Joseph that God would one day bring him into the promised land, he

believed it. But to do so, meant his faith had to reach out more than 300 years into the future. By faith he had to see the day when the Israelites would leave Egypt en masse, and be established in Canaan. How unlikely that seemed at the time. The Israelites were then living off the fat of the land in Egypt. As an Egyptian ruler, Joseph knew his body would be embalmed and laid in a great tomb. Despite that, he made his kinsmen promise to take his remains with them when they left for the promised land. With the exception of his first 17 years, Joseph spent all of his life in Egypt. Still it wasn't his home. His heart was in Canaan. He believed the nation would end up there in God's time. When the day came for the Israelites to leave Egypt centuries later, his embalmed body was taken up and carried along on the exodus. Finally he was buried alongside Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the cave at Machpelah which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite. Joseph's life was a remarkable one with numerous instances of true faith. But the writer does not draw our attention to any of them. Instead, he focuses on that moment when Joseph's faith beheld the exodus from Egypt and he secured the pledge from his relatives. To the writer of Hebrews, Joseph's greatness was believing the promises of God, not his exalted station in Egypt. His faith was at its zenith when he believed God would keep his promises and gave orders based on them. All three of these men—Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, believed God's Word had to come to pass even if they didn't live to see it. They all felt they were links in the chain that led to the day of fulfillment.

MOSES

23. When Moses was born, it was entirely by faith that his parents hid him for three months. When they saw what a remarkable child he was, their faith made them unafraid of the Pharaoh's orders and they spared the baby.



So strongly did Moses' parents believe that God was going to use their child, their faith overcame any fear of the king's decree. They set the infant adrift on the Nile, trusting God to save the child for His own purpose.



MOSES. With the book of Genesis behind us, we come to a new set of heroes in the book of Exodus. Finally the time came for God to bring His people up out of Egypt. A man had to be raised up for the task. That man was Moses. However, were it not for the faith of his parents, there might never have been a Moses. At the time when Moses was born, the Pharaoh had commanded that all newly born male children should be cast into the Nile to die. Aware that an unusual child had been born to them, the parents of Moses made an ark of bulrushes and set him adrift in the Nile. They risked their lives to do this. But they were willing because their faith saw something in the child. He was no ordinary baby. He was certainly beautiful, but their faith saw more than that. They believed God had a special purpose for him. Centuries earlier God had told Abraham that the great nation which was to come from him would go into bondage for 400 years. Those 400 years had now

passed. When Moses' parents beheld their remarkable child, they were ready to believe that God was about to fulfill His Word. So strongly did they believe that God was going to use their child, their faith overcame any natural fear of the king's decree. They set the infant adrift on the Nile, trusting God to somehow save the child for His own purpose. In doing so, they were not unlike Abraham who believed that God would still use Isaac even though he were slain on the altar.

24. When he was grown, it was by faith that Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25. He chose instead, to suffer the hardships of God's people rather than enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. 26. To him, the shame of being identified with the coming Christ was greater riches than all the wealth of Egypt. With his eyes fixed on the reward God had for him, he was ready to trade away the temporary benefits of earthly rank.



When Moses was 40 years old, he found himself wanting to be identified with the down-trodden people of Israel. By faith, he came to know they were God's chosen people and that God was about to fulfill His promises. So he chose to abandon the splendor of Egypt's court and side with the Hebrew slaves.



SON OF. Just who this daughter of Pharaoh was we don't know. Neither history nor the Bible tell us. But it is not impossible that she was a childless queen-regent, which would have put Moses in line for the throne. According to Jewish tradition, he was indeed headed for the throne. In any event, he was treated as an Egyptian prince. And while his fellow Israelites were suffering, he was getting the finest education Egypt could provide. He enjoyed all the comfort, ease and privileges his rank brought him. Then, as Stephen puts it, "when he was fully forty years of age," he came to a tremendous crisis. He found himself wanting to be identified with the down-trodden people of Israel. By faith, he came to know they were God's chosen people and that God was about to fulfill His promise to lead them to their own land. But this posed a problem. How could Moses identify himself with Israel and keep his princely status? How could he continue as a member of Egyptian royalty and watch God's people suffer? He couldn't. So he chose to abandon the splendor of Egypt's court and side with the Hebrew slaves. Once it settled on his heart that HE might be the deliverer, to go on living in princely power would be sinful. To do so, he would have to turn his back on God's people. That would be the sin of apostasy—the very sin against which the readers of this letter were repeatedly warned. So by faith he traded the glory of Egypt to become identified with the despised Israelites.



GREATER RICHES. There is nothing sinful, of course, in riches or power—if that is what God wants you to have. But for Moses to continue in Pharaoh's court, knowing the king's scheme for destroying the Jews, would indeed be a sinful course for him. It would be SIN for him to stand by and watch God's people suffer, when he was one of them. The only alternative was to become a despised slave himself. He knew that all the pleasures of Egyptian nobility would last only a short season, even if he became ruler of Egypt himself. But the reward of God, on the other hand, he

believed to be eternal. So it was a matter of trading the temporary for the eternal. To him, the shame of being identified with the coming Messiah (Christ), was greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt. If it be asked why our writer uses the word Christ in connection with Moses, the answer is that "Christ" is the Greek word for Messiah. Besides, the Hebrew nation belongs to Jesus.

THE GREATER REWARD

CITY OF EGYPT



The glory of Egypt
temporary

CELESTIAL CITY



The glory of God
eternal

O, that we could learn to emulate Moses' example ourselves. And fix our hearts on God's reward, rather than the things of this world. We need to remind ourselves that **REWARDS** are **EARNED**. They come at the **END**, whereas salvation comes at the **BEGINNING** of our spiritual lives. Salvation is a free gift; it cannot be earned. Rewards are the result of **our sacrifice** for Christ, whereas salvation is the result of **Christ's sacrifice** for us. Our rewards are based on our faithfulness to the **JOB** that Jesus assigns us in this life. It will be enjoyed as we carry out the job He assigns us in the **NEXT** life. Moses was glad to bear the scorn and disapproval of men, in order to receive the reward God holds out to all who take Him at His Word. Shouldn't we be willing to stand a few dirty looks in order to witness for Jesus? That's one task He has given us all (Acts 1:8).

He is the One Who appeared to Abraham and called the nation into existence. He is the ROCK that followed them in the wilderness and led them as a pillar of cloud and fire. He IS the King of the Jews. So for Moses to be identified with Israel, was to be identified with her Messiah (Christ). This is what the writer wants his readers to see. They felt threatened by the shame of being associated with Jesus' name. But now they see that Moses, their hero, **PREFERRED** that shame to the glory of Egypt. To him faithfulness to Christ promised greater wealth than all the treasure this world has to offer. The writer wants his readers to fix their eyes on God's reward and emulate Moses' example.

27. When Moses fled from Egypt, it wasn't because he feared the wrath of Pharaoh. By faith, he had committed himself to serve the invisible God. He was able to endure because the unseen God was more real to him than the king of Egypt.



FEARED. Some commentators feel this verse could refer to the exodus rather than the time when Moses fled to the land of Midian. But if the writer meant the exodus, it would hardly be necessary for him to say, "It wasn't because of the wrath of Pharaoh." At that time, Pharaoh **TOLD** Moses to go and take his people into the wilderness. It seems more probable that the reference is to Moses' flight after killing the Egyptian. However, even that was **NOT** made in fear. You recall that Moses had gone to his brethren to offer himself as their deliverer. In the process he saw an Israelite being abused by an Egyptian and slew him. When word of it reached Pharaoh, he wanted Moses' life. So now Moses was in trouble. But that wasn't all. His own brethren also turned against him, saying, "We won't have you as our judge!" What was he to do? The Pharaoh wanted to kill him; his own brethren refused his leadership. There was no way for him to do what God had called him to do. So he wisely chose to retreat to the Sinai desert. Aware now that he had made a mistake in judging the Lord's timing,

he fled to Midian to wait on Him. Since it is easier to work for God than to wait on Him, it took GREAT FAITH for Moses to sit out 40 years of inaction. It was the realness of the Lord in his life that made it possible. His confidence in God, based on this reality, developed BEFORE Moses left the palace. When the Lord became more real to him than the king of Egypt, he had no choice but to obey Him. This is the real explanation of Moses' greatness.

28. And it was also by faith that he instituted the first passover and ordered the sprinkling of blood on the doorposts, so that the death angel would not kill the firstborn of the Israelites.



PASSOVER. When the day finally came for God's people to leave Egypt, Moses was commanded to do two unusual things; (1) have the people eat the passover lamb, (2) put blood on the doorposts. As strange as these orders were, Moses proceeded to do them without batting an eye. So completely did he trust God, it no longer mattered WHAT He asked Moses to do. Observing that feast that night was an act of faith. But Moses didn't stop there. He went on and laid down regulations for the keeping of that passover throughout all future generations as a witness of their deliverance from Egypt. And he did this BEFORE there was any deliverance at all! This is proof that Moses never once doubted that God meant to deliver His people out of Egypt. The second act, putting blood on the doorposts, also required a lot of faith. Such a thing as God purposed to do had never happened before. As part of the 10th plague on Egypt, the death angel was to go through all Egypt, slaying the firstborn of man and beast in every household. To prevent this from happening to the Israelites, God instructed Moses to sprinkle blood on their doorposts. With unflinching faith, he proceeded to do exactly as he was told. As a result, the plague did not touch the firstborn in any Israelite family. Moses was so conscious

of the presence of God that carrying out an order, no matter how strange it seemed, was perfectly natural for him. No matter what God asked, he was ready to do it. He had come to know that all of God's instructions were in the best interests of His people and were backed by His mighty power.



When Moses was commanded by God to institute the passover, he proceeded to do it, never once doubting that God meant to deliver His people out of Egypt.

THREE MORE ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAITH

29. By faith the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea as if they were on dry land. When the Egyptians tried it they were drowned. 30. It was faith that brought down the walls of Jericho after the Israelites, at God's command, marched around the city for seven days. 31. It was faith that kept the prostitute Rahab from

perishing along with the disobedient people of her city. Her faith was clearly manifested when she welcomed the Israelites as friends.



When Moses gave the command to cross the Red Sea, the Israelites obeyed BY FAITH, and their feet went across as on dry land. Moses had told them that God would protect them and destroy the Egyptians. They believed the Word of the Lord and their faith made it a safe highway for them.



RED SEA. On the day of the great exodus, the people of Israel gathered their families and belongings. Acting on the faith of Moses they marched to

the edge of the Red Sea. At this point only MOSES' FAITH was in operation. They simply acted on his orders. Their march halted at the Red Sea. Then came the word that the Egyptian army was bearing down on them from the rear. In fear, they cried out against Moses, "You brought us out here to have us killed!" Then the rugged 80 year old leader commanded them, "FEAR NOT, but stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!" As they watched, Moses' faith went into action again. He lifted his rod and the sea divided before their eyes. It was thrown back, says the Scriptures, so that the water was walled up on both sides (Exodus 14:22). Then Moses gave the command to go forward between those quivering walls of water. Now it was time for their **own faith** to go into action. It did. They obeyed Moses' command BY FAITH, and their feet went across as on dry land. Moses had told them God would protect them and destroy the Egyptians. They believed that Word of the Lord and moved forward between the walls of water. Their faith made it a safe highway for them. When the Egyptians tried it, they perished. The faith of the Israelites stands out against the presumption of the Egyptians. The author is specifically speaking of the faith of the Israelites here, not the faith of Moses. In all of the 40 years of wandering which followed, they never again were able to trust God for a great deliverance such as this. It was the only time they appropriated the power of God as a people.



JERICO. Forty years have gone by. A new generation of Israelites has arrived at the border of the promised land. They are ready to act on God's Word and take the land. But their path is barred by a great fortress, the city of Jericho. This high walled city was a formidable barrier. They couldn't bypass it. If they did, they'd never have any peace in the land. Yet, from a military point of view it was impossible to conquer. The Israelites came as nomads off the desert. They had no battering rams or engines of war. There was no way for them to lay siege to the city. Yet God told

Joshua and the people, "I'm going to give you this city." They believed Him. They were ready to trust Him and carry out His orders no matter how foolish they seemed.



God told Joshua and the people, "I'm going to give you Jericho." They believed Him and carried out what seemed to be ridiculous orders. The walls came tumbling down—flat! The fall of Jericho was NOT a military conquest, it was **an act of faith**.

And His orders were ridiculous. Imagine how the soldiers manning the walls of Jericho must have laughed to see grown men hoping to conquer a fortress simply by marching around it. But that's what God told them to do. Led by the priests blowing ram's horns, they marched around the city once a day for 6 days. On the 7th day, the Israelites shouted and the walls came tumbling down—flat! There is archeological evidence that an earthquake may have occurred at that same time. In any event, the Israelites "went up into the city, every man before Him, and **TOOK** the city" (Joshua 6:20). The fall of Jericho was **NOT** a military conquest, it was an **act of faith**. The people never expected to conquer the city in their own strength. They believed God was going to do it for them. They were ready to trust Him for the impossible, and nothing seemed more impossible at the time. The Jericho story teaches us that what is impossible for man is always possible with God through faith. It's precious to know that, for we all have Jerichos in our lives which cannot be taken in our strength.



RAHAB. Here is one of the most surprising personalities in the hall of fame—Rahab. A gentile woman who was a prostitute and betrayer of her country, is listed here because she told a lie—by faith. Had she not lied, we would never have heard of her. When Joshua sent spies to scout out the military situation in Jericho, they took lodging in Rahab's house. Somehow their presence was discovered and the city officials sent soldiers to Rahab's house to seize them. But the harlot hid them, lying to the soldiers as to their whereabouts. After that, she helped them escape from the city. The only thing she asked in return was that she and her family might be spared when Jericho fell to the Israelites. The people of Jericho had heard of the mighty deeds of the Israelites (Red Sea crossing and destruction of the Egyptian army), but only this woman interpreted them as being done by the God of Israel. Of her own free will, she elected to put her faith in Him. To the spies she said, "I know the Lord has given you the land!" What a remarkable state-

ment of faith. She made this prediction when the downfall of Jericho seemed impossible. She went on to say "... the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and earth beneath" (Joshua 2:9-11). Not only did this woman confess her faith in God, Who could do the impossible, but backed that faith with works, risking her life to save the spies. The result: she and her family were the only ones spared out of all the inhabitants of Jericho. By faith she joined the people of God and married Salmon. She became the mother of Boaz which makes her an ancestress of the Lord Jesus. This woman was far from great in the eyes of the world for she was a harlot, a betrayer and a liar. But in the eyes of God she was great enough for His hall of fame! That's the difference faith makes.



Rahab, a Jericho prostitute and betrayer of her country, is listed here because she told a lie—BY FAITH. She believed the God of Israel was going to give the land to the Israelites, and helped the Israelite spies escape from the city. She and her family were the only ones spared.

"Is not the history of Israel full of such heroes?"

32. Do I really need to go on? We'd run out of time if I went into detail concerning Gideon, Barak, Samson

Jephthah; as well as David and Samuel and the prophets. 33. Through faith they smashed whole kingdoms, ruled righteously in a sinful world and saw many promises come true. They shut the mouths of lions, 34. quenched the power of fire and escaped being killed by the edge of the sword. Out of weakness they found the strength to be mighty in war, routing whole armies completely. 35a. There were also women, who through faith, received their dead back again through a resurrection.



GO ON? The author could go on endlessly with examples of overcoming faith. The history of Israel is full of them. But he has to stop some place. So from here on he summarizes the achievements of various ones as their names spring to memory. There doesn't seem to be a particular order or sequence. The first four come from the time of the judges, and there's something comforting about his selection. When you read the account of their lives in the book of Judges, you wonder whether or not they had real faith in God. This is particularly true of Samson, Jephthah and Barak. Yet here is God's Word on it that they belong in the hall of fame. The most familiar, perhaps, is Gideon. The story of how he routed the Midianite army with only 300 men is famous. Samson is well known too. His exploits against the Philistines and how he finally brought the stadium down, killing more in his death than during his life, is also famous. Neither Jephthah nor Barak sound like godly men in the account, but apparently they became conscious of God and knew they were instruments in His hands. Both of them enjoyed incredible victories in war. The only king mentioned is David. We know him for his sins and his great faith. As sinful as he was, God used him to build Israel into a powerful nation. Samuel was the first of the prophets. He not only anointed Israel's first two kings, but there were times when he and the prophets who followed him, stood alone against the entire nation of Israel in trying to bring the people back to God.

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"Is not the history of Israel full of such heroes?"

32. Do I really need to go on? We'd run out of time if I went into detail concerning Gideon, Barak, Samson,

Jephthah; as well as David and Samuel and the prophets. 33. Through faith they smashed whole kingdoms, ruled righteously in a sinful world and saw many promises come true. They shut the mouths of lions, 34. quenched the power of fire and escaped being killed by the edge of the sword. Out of weakness they found the strength to be mighty in war, routing whole armies completely. 35a. There were also women, who through faith, received their dead back again through a resurrection.



GO ON? The author could go on endlessly with examples of overcoming faith. The history of Israel is full of them. But he has to stop some place. So from here on he summarizes the achievements of various ones as their names spring to memory. There doesn't seem to be a particular order or sequence. The first four come from the time of the judges, and there's something comforting about his selection. When you read the account of their lives in the book of Judges, you wonder whether or not they had real faith in God. This is particularly true of Samson, Jephthah and Barak. Yet here is God's Word on it that they belong in the hall of fame. The most familiar, perhaps, is Gideon. The story of how he routed the Midianite army with only 300 men is famous. Samson is well known too. His exploits against the Philistines and how he finally brought the stadium down, killing more in his death than during his life, is also famous. Neither Jephthah nor Barak sound like godly men in the account, but apparently they became conscious of God and knew they were instruments in His hands. Both of them enjoyed incredible victories in war. The only king mentioned is David. We know him for his sins and his great faith. As sinful as he was, God used him to build Israel into a powerful nation. Samuel was the first of the prophets. He not only anointed Israel's first two kings, but there were times when he and the prophets who followed him, stood alone against the entire nation of Israel in trying to bring the people back to God.



THROUGH FAITH. Our writer employs rapid-fire phrases in listing the achievements of faith heroes. We're not to think of them only as the exploits of the people he has just named, but rather that which took place throughout Jewish history in general. Some of these acts, however, we naturally associate with certain people. David was definitely one who smashed kingdoms and ruled in righteousness. He took God at His Word and saw promises come true right before his eyes. When it comes to stopping the mouths of lions, we recognize Daniel at once. And certainly it had to be his three friends who quenched the power of fire in the flaming furnace. Actually we can say that from the days of Joshua to the time of the Maccabees, men who were weak in themselves, became strong through faith, and time and again routed whole armies from their soil. What our writer wants us to note is that the incredible odds against these people meant little to them when they knew they were instruments in the hands of God. When the author speaks of women receiving their dead back again by resurrection, there are two he must have in mind; (1) the poor widow of Zarephath, whose son was restored by Elijah (1 Kings 17:17ff), (2) and the wealthy Shunamite woman whose son was restored by Elisha (II Kings 4:32ff). While these are referred to as resurrections, we must NOT confuse them with the NT idea of resurrection. These boys were restored to **natural** life. They died again. That is NOT what the NT means when it speaks of resurrection. Because of that, we will shortly find our author speaking of a "**better** resurrection."

"Weren't there others who also believed, yet didn't fare well at all?"

35b. On the other hand, there were many who trusted God as much as they did, yet died under torture. Looking forward to a better resurrection, they refused to win their freedom at the price of denying God. 36. Others were publicly taunted, beaten and left chained

in dungeons. 37. Some were stoned to death, sawn in two and run through with swords. These dear people wandered about dressed only in sheepskins and goat-skins. Treated as fugitives, they were left destitute, persecuted and utterly miserable. 38. Yet all the while they were too good for this world. Can't you just see them hiding out in the deserts and mountains and holed up in underground caverns?



OTHER HAND. Our writer has listed some of the amazing things the O.T. saints **achieved** by faith. But that's only part of the story, the glamor side. There's another side, the **suffering** that goes with faith. The interval from the prophets to the time of the Maccabees abounds with examples of suffering on the part of the faithful. Many of the prophets forfeited their lives to remain faithful. Some, like Zechariah, were stoned to death. Tradition says that Jeremiah died that way. In the days of Jezebel at least 100 prophets were slain by the sword on her orders. According to Jewish legend Isaiah was sawn with a wooden saw while his enemies tried to make him deny his faith. While all this is in the writer's mind, we can tell from his language and choice of phrases that he is thinking primarily of the incredible sufferings that occurred under Antiochus Epiphanes. The Bible doesn't furnish any details of those sufferings, for they occurred during the silent years, the 400 year interval between Malachi and Matthew. The books of the Maccabees, while they are NOT inspired, give us an accurate account of what happened during that period and the awful tortures inflicted on those who refused to deny God and give up the Law. From these for example, we learn of the deaths of Eleazar, an old Jewish scribe, and seven brothers who chose a horrible death rather than give up the Law. They were torn apart on racks, skinned alive, whipped to pieces, had their bowels pierced with red hot spikes, and roasted alive in a huge frying pan. They could have been set free, simply by denying their faith. Believing God would reward them with a **better resurrection**, they refused to compromise with idolatry.

By the time of the Maccabees, the hope of a resurrection to eternal life had begun to burn brightly in the hearts of the faithful. This enabled them to endure those awful tortures.



FUGITIVES. While it is true that certain of the prophets (including David) had to live a fugitive existence in mountains and caves, the general description in these verses pertains more precisely to those godly Jews who had to flee Jerusalem in the days of the Syrian governor, Antiochus Epiphanes. In 168 B.C., this king captured Jerusalem. Using torture methods equal to anything dreamed up by Hitler, he did his best to get the Jews to forsake God and the Law. Clearly inspired by Satan, it was one of the most devilish attempts in history to wipe out a religion. If Satan could wipe out Judaism, the world would be denied its Savior. Those believers who were not captured, fled to the mountains and deserts. The reference to animal skins indicates they were stripped down to nothing. Homeless and impoverished, they went without the bare necessities of life. Treated as though they were not worthy to live in this world, they were in fact the salt of the earth. It is a fact of history that Christianity owes its existence to the martyrs of those days. The author hasn't said a lot in these verses, but he knows his readers recognize what he has in mind. The stories of the Jewish heroes who died for the faith in those awful days will come immediately to their imaginations. Indirectly he is saying to them, "If they can suffer for the Lord like that and remain faithful, surely you can take whatever reproach and abuse comes against you for the sake of Christ!" Faith in the Lord carries no guarantee of comfort or safety in this life, but it does offer an undreamed of reward in the life to come. That is the life that really counts.

39. And what did their great trust in God bring all these heroes of faith? While they won a terrific testimony that God was pleased with their faith, they did not see the fulfillment of what He had promised them.

At least not in their own day. Why? 40. God wanted them to wait and share in the better program He had planned for our time. That way they couldn't come to perfection without us, and we'd be together with them in the one perfect family.



DID NOT SEE. Our author has given us quite a list of people with precisely the kind of faith that God seeks in men; the kind that would rather die than forsake Him. Yet, they never got to see the fulfillment of the dream His promise put in their hearts. That is, they never entered into the realization of the promise behind all promises—intimacy with God as His own children. Not a one of those O.T. saints was able to enjoy God as his Father. But that's exactly as God planned it. He never intended for them to know that glorious relationship in their day. Why not? That blessedness wasn't possible until Jesus could come into the world and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. No one could be joined to God and inherit the divine nature until sin was cared for. And that couldn't be done until the right moment in history. The coming of the Lord Jesus had to wait until the world was ready for Him. So the time of His arrival was delayed until the world had learned about sin and the kind of sacrifice needed to put it away. Yet, even though actual sonship was denied the O.T. believers, the hope of it burned so brightly in their hearts they were able to live for God and take the worst of the world's abuse and persecutions.



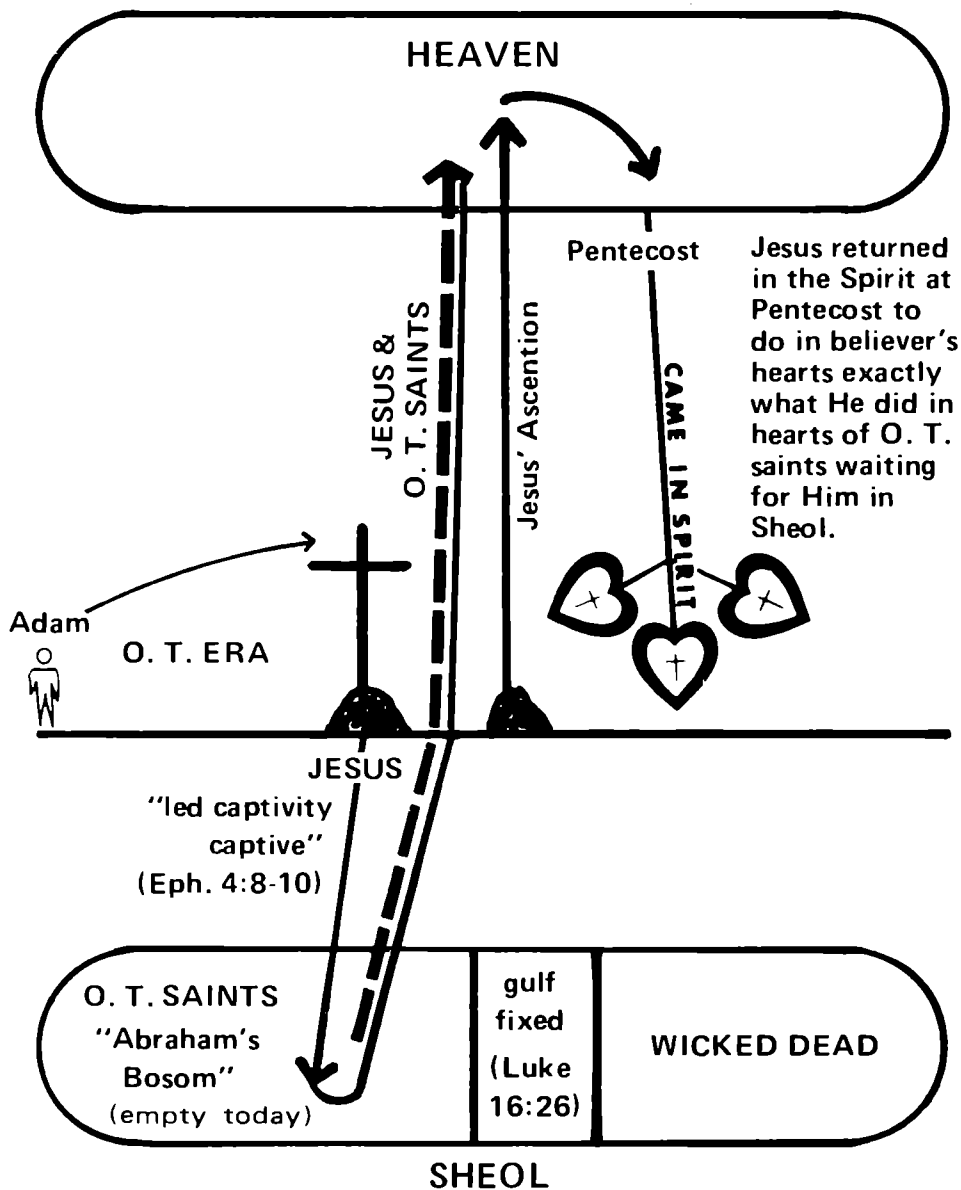
WAIT. The Jewish nation was God's instrument to teach the world that sin was expensive and that there was no way for man to put away his own sins. For 1400 years, the Jewish people with their sacrifices and rituals dramatized on the stage of the world the truth that the **wages of sin is death**. The Law, with its priesthood and sacrificial ceremonies, was God's way of teaching mankind that sin has a price tag. An entire nation was used to enact this truth. Finally the world was ready to witness the perfect sacrifice for sin and

understand why it was necessary. Since the fulfillment of the promise depended on that perfect sacrifice, the O.T. saints had to wait until the time came for it to be made. Then Jesus came into the world. When He died on Calvary for the sins of the world, the Jewish program was over. So was the waiting. Until that time though, there was no way for anyone to become a child of God. No one could go to heaven without the holiness and righteousness needed to live with a holy God. So there was nothing to do but wait. The fact that the O.T. believers WAITED after their bodies had died, is evidence of their conscious existence some place. But where? In the O.T., the place of the departed dead is called "Sheol." Both the believing and the unbelieving dead went there. Apparently though, there was a separation between the two groups, for the believing dead were said to be comforted in "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22,26). Here they waited until Jesus could put away their sins and bring them their sonship.



BETTER. Consider what happens to those who put their trust in Christ after Pentecost. They become the sons of God BY BIRTH—instantly! They are born again with HIS holy nature. This automatically makes them feel at home with Him. They address God as Father and thrill to intimacy with Him! The O.T. saints never knew such blessedness. They wouldn't dare address God as "Papa" (the "abba" of Romans 8:15). There was always that VEIL of the unclean conscience between the O.T. saint and God. That veil remained until Jesus tore it down by His death at Calvary. Therefore the relationship of the N.T. believer to God is far "better" than anything the O.T. saints knew. The Christian enjoys complete forgiveness for sins—past, present and future, as well as total acceptance by God as His own child. Those under the old covenant couldn't possibly experience such a thing. It simply wasn't available in their day. Yet they died believing that one day they would inherit this very thing as the fulfillment of God's promise. Their faith was rewarded. The day came when they did receive it.

WHEN THE O. T. SAINTS RECEIVED THEIR SONSHIP



See how Sheol is drawn as a place for ALL the departed dead. It still exists today. In O.T. times, when the bodies of the saints expired, their souls went to "Abraham's bosom," a particular section of Sheol. Here they waited until Jesus died for their sins and provided the righteousness needed to live with God. During the time His body was in the tomb (I think), Jesus went in the Spirit and announced the news to the people in Sheol (I Peter 3:18,19). Those who had died in faith, received their sonship and righteousness that instant. They had their **Pentecost** in the "lower room." Then they were led into heaven (Eph. 4:8-10), where they are now members of the SAME BODY with us, making but one family in God (I Cor. 12:13). Thus these saints were "in Christ" before we were (Hebrews 12:23). They experienced Pentecost before it occurred on earth.

When Jesus finished His work at Calvary, sonship became possible. It was made available to the O.T. saints first of all. In the Spirit, the Lord ministered their sonship to them in prison. Therefore, every O.T. saint has, right at this moment, the **SAME** perfection in Christ that we have. They are sons of God the same as we. The writer's point however is this: since N.T. believers have such a blessed relationship with God, it ought to be easier for them to live the life of faith than it was for the O.T. saints who had only the promise of receiving what they now have.

12 1. Now then, as for us, seeing we have this great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us get rid of every weight that would hold us back and the besetting sin that entangles us so easily. And let's run this race with all the endurance we can muster, because it is clearly laid out before us.



WITNESSES. Our writer pictures the believer's life on earth as a race. And the race is toward the goal of pleasing the Lord and becoming like Him. What believers will be like in the day when they are revealed with Christ is determined by **HOW** they run this race. To win this race, a person has to be faithful all the way. All those saints of O.T. times, which our author listed in Chapter Eleven, he sees as a "great cloud of witnesses" to our race. The Greek word for "surrounding us" communicates the idea of an amphitheatre. Thus the writer would have us picture ourselves in a stadium, with tier after tier of O.T. saints rising above us. As we run, we are to hear their shouts urging us to press on, to keep going. Now we're not putting on a show for these people. They're not witnesses in that sense. They're not there for that reason. They're **NOT** there to watch us as mere spectators (though they do see us), but to **inspire** us and **cheer** us on. Having been in the race themselves, they are witnesses in the courtroom sense. They testify that it pays to trust the Lord and remain faithful to Him no

matter how rough the going gets. It is their part to assure us that the race can be won. As we press toward the goal line we are to hear their roaring shouts, "If we can do it, you can too. So keep going, you won't be sorry!"

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Our writer pictures the believer's life on earth as a race. And the race is toward the goal of pleasing the Lord and becoming like Him. What believers will be like in the day when they are revealed with Christ is determined by HOW they run this race.

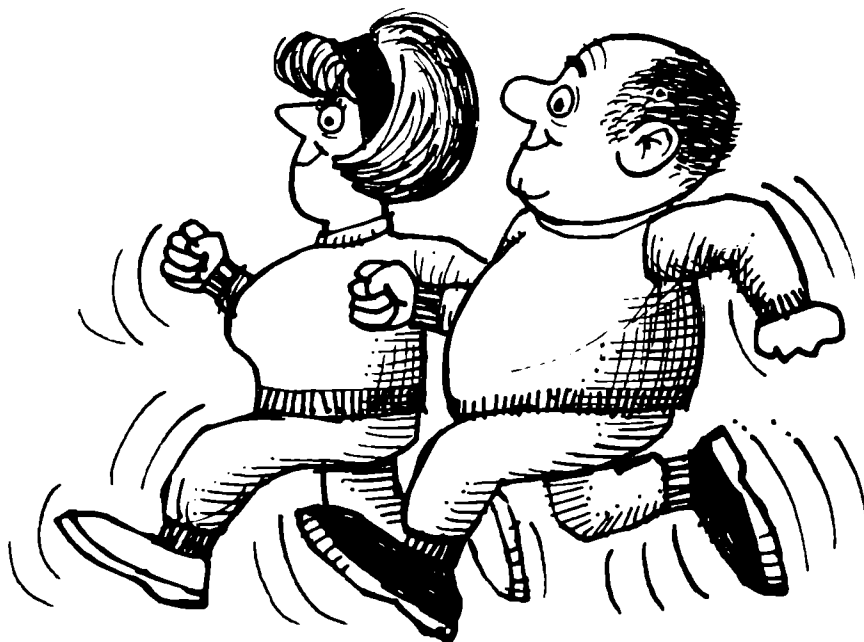


WEIGHT/SIN. In preparation for the race, we're told to get rid of everything that would slow us down or hold us back. The author has two kinds of hindrances in mind, weights and sin. They're not the same. First, can you imagine a runner who hopes to win, carrying weights in his hands and on his back? That's ridiculous, you say. Right. And that's the writer's point exactly. If a believer hopes to win the race in Christ, he's got to get rid of everything that hinders his running. When our author speaks of weights, he does not mean things which are evil in themselves, but things which keep a Christian from giving his best to the Lord. For example, it may not be sinful for a Christian to use his time and talents to get ahead in the world and seek financial security for his family. But he can't win the race if he does. Too much of his energy goes into things which cannot be laid up in heaven. Again, there is nothing evil in vacations, having nice clothes, a new car and a fine house; yet seeking these things can keep a believer from putting Christ first. There are many things, which are not sinful in themselves, but are definitely weights for the man who wants to win the race. When it comes to "besetting sin," every Christian would have to own up to one or two that plague him all the time. The problem with sin is, we like it. We fall into it so easily. That's what makes it so besetting. For one man it might be the lust of the flesh, for another it might be greed or jealousy. Again one person might be tempted with gluttony, whereas another likes to gossip. These things are definitely sinful and distracting. They foul up a runner by getting his eyes off the goal. But because we like our lusts, we justify them. That's what makes them cling to our lives and entangle us as we try to run the race. Runners are warned to shake off both weights and their pet sins.



ENDURANCE. When our writer says, "Let's run the race with all the endurance we can muster," he is making the point he wants to drive home. This is the meat of the verse, more important than the idea of

weights and sin. You see, the race we're in is NOT a sprint. It's not a 100 yard dash. It's a **long-distance course**, and that takes patience and endurance. When it comes to faith, speed means nothing. It's endurance that counts. This is the one quality a person must have in order to win. A believer must be able to take it and not give up. This was the very thing with which the readers were struggling. They were suffering for their faith, becoming impatient in the process. Because they had placed their trust in the Lord, they somehow expected Him to ease their burden. But He hadn't. They were tempted to give up and go back to Judaism rather than remain faithful to Jesus. But they needed to learn something all Christians have to learn—the **Lord is in no hurry**. Why? It takes **TIME** to accomplish what He seeks in our lives. It is by means of stressful situations that He makes changes in us. God has the habit of squeezing all the profit He can out of a situation before sending any



The race we're in is an endurance race. When it comes to faith, speed means nothing. Endurance is the one quality a person must have in order to win. A believer must be able to take it and not give up, and be able to endure to the end.

relief. He often waits until the last minute before answering our cry for help. That's why endurance is the chief quality for winning. If we stay in the race until we learn to trust the Lord, no matter what, we're sure to win. In time we'll gradually start shedding those weights and putting off the sins we love so much. It might take years, but God is in no hurry. It is part of His technique not to remove our weaknesses. He lets us stew in our sins until we get fed up and learn to hate them. People just don't do those things they hate. So if we hang in there, we'll win. Or as Paul puts it, we'll reap in due season "if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

"What motivation do we have for running this race?"

2. What's more, let's run it with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of the faith it takes to win. His is the greatest example of all. With His eyes on the joy that awaited Him after His suffering, He endured the cross without giving a second thought to the shame that went with it. And where is He now? Seated at God's right hand, experiencing that joy.



JESUS. Our author has truly given us a remarkable list of heroes of the faith, but it is NOT to them that he wants us to look for an example or guide. While they can encourage us and testify that the faith life is the only life worth living, they are not the best example to follow. The greatest example of the faith life is Jesus. We're to fix our eyes on Him. When the word "Jesus" is used alone, as it is here, it always refers to our Lord's humanity. Thus we're reminded that Jesus Himself ran this race—AS A MAN! So, even though we're surrounded by all those wonderful saints who have gone before us, Jesus is the MAN to watch. No one can compare to Him! Without any outward evidences, He lived by sheer faith in God. Never once did He yield to temptation; never once did He seek to escape the bitter trials

which came upon Him. From morning until night, all He cared about was doing the will of His heavenly Father. We can't say that about anyone else. That's what makes Him the perfect example. When we realize that He did this AS A MAN, He has to be the perfect example. On the other hand, had He done this as God, He couldn't be our example. There is no way for a human to walk in the steps of God.



PIONEER. While the O.T. saints exercised the same faith we do, they were NOT Christians. That is, they were not God's sons by spiritual birth (John 1:12,13). When people put their trust in Christ, AFTER Pentecost, they are born again as God's sons and become partakers of the divine nature. Thus they have TWO natures—the human and the divine. This was not true of the O.T. saints, for no one could be born again prior to Pentecost. The Lord Jesus then, is our example for still another reason—**He was the first Christian.** Born with His two natures (human and divine) He was the first person to live (pioneer) the Christian life as WE live it. He showed us how to walk in unbroken fellowship with our heavenly Father. No one had ever done this until Jesus did it. In fact, no one knew such a thing was possible. It wasn't possible until sin was put away and people could receive the Spirit of Christ. Only then would a man know he was a child of God and dare to approach God on an intimate basis. Beyond this, Jesus went all the way to the cross without once wavering in His faith. In doing so He became the PERFECTER of the faith life, living it perfectly from start to finish. Thus He became the perfect example. As for running the race, He was the first to cross the goal line and win the prize—a **place at God's right hand.** In spite of all that He suffered, this amazing MAN won the race. Through His perfect faith and obedience, He EARNED the right to reign over God's kingdom. Because this same Man lives in our hearts by faith, He is ready to help all those who care, to reach **the same goal.**



Jesus went all the way to the cross without wavering in His faith. In doing so He became the **PERFECTER** of the faith life, living it perfectly from start to finish. As for running the race, He was the first to cross the finish line and win the prize—a place at God's right hand.



JOY. How was it that Jesus was able to endure so much suffering and not give up? How was He able to take public rejection, and scourging as well as the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary? Not only did He suffer shame as a criminal, but He was crucified naked before a jeering mob. Death by crucifixion is probably the most painful and shameful of all deaths, yet He never gave any of that a second thought. Why? Because He was aware of the **joy** that awaited Him when it was all over. Very clearly the **JOY** He knew would follow His sufferings was so great that He was willing to endure all the terrible things which came upon Him. The prize held out to Him made it worth anything He had to go through. And what was the prize? It was two fold; (1) the thrill of winning righteousness for Himself (as a man) and His people (our salvation), (2) the excitement of winning the kingdom for Himself and those willing to run the race with Him (our reward). Observe in the verses above how the **race**

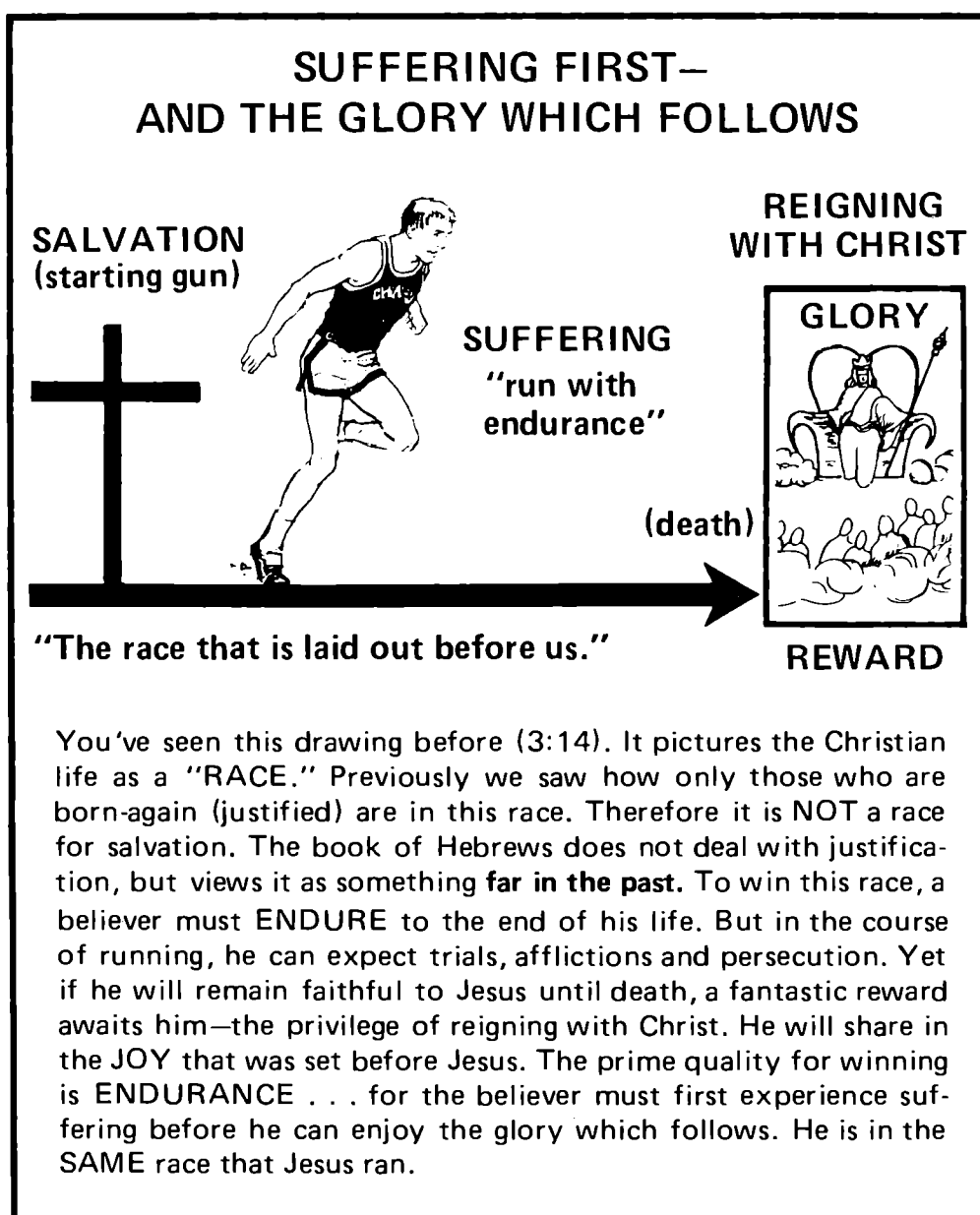
which is laid out before us is exactly parallel to the path Jesus trod. Since they are exactly parallel in the Greek text, the author wants us to understand that we are in the **same race** with Jesus, with the **same joy** beckoning us. In winning the race, the Lord won the right to reign at God's right hand. But He didn't win it for Himself alone. One of His promises is: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My throne . . ." (Rev. 3:21). Please note this is for **overcomers only**. A person has to run and **endure** all the way to the end to win. It is the writer's hope that the joy set before us is so attractive, we will give no thought to the pain or shame that goes with standing firm for Christ all the way to the end.

3. So when you feel yourself becoming weary in the race and wavering in the faith, consider Him. Think of all the hatred and terrible things sinful men said against Him and did to Him. Then compare your testings with His. Your trials won't seem nearly so bad by comparison.



COMPARE. The writer asks his readers to total up in their own minds all that Jesus went through for them, then compare His sufferings with their own. The word "consider" means to compare, i.e., weigh one thing against another. It is close to our word "analyze." Apparently fierce hostility hadn't come against these readers as yet. And what the Lord had endured was far more than anything they would ever be called upon to bear. In effect he is saying, "Can you really compare your suffering with what He went through for you? He feels that when they find themselves wavering in the faith, comparing their sufferings with those of Jesus can keep them from fainting and dropping out of the race. He believes this for two reasons. (1) It will make them realize they haven't suffered too much yet. Whenever we see someone worse off than ourselves, we tend to feel our situation is not so bad after all. (2) They'll realize afresh that God's program clearly calls for suffering before entering into glory. After all, the Lord as the

pioneer of the Christian life, established the pattern—suffering first and the glory which follows. If suffering followed by exaltation is the divinely appointed way, why should we expect the race to be any different for us? As hard as it is for Christians to grasp, **this is God's way**. It's the route that Jesus took and we're in the same race, following His example. Realizing that should make it easier to press toward the goal. It's when we think what is happening to us is **UNFAIR** or **UNJUST** that we tend to get discouraged. When we learn that such a thing is **NORMAL** and fits God's plan, it is much easier to endure.



4. After all, you have not yet been called upon to resist unto blood in your struggle against sin.



UNTO BLOOD. At the time this letter was written, the readers had not yet reached the peak of their suffering for Christ. In the past, they had suffered some fierce persecution, but so far none had been called upon to seal his faith with his own blood. However, when the writer says NOT YET, it implies they may have to give up their lives in the future. But what is so surprising about that? If the world hates God, then it is bound to hate those who serve Him. That truth has been demonstrated ever since Cain slew Abel. It is clearly seen in the O.T. saints who chose to pour out their lives rather than forsake God. And it is definitely seen in the murder of God's Son at Calvary. The sufferings of the readers had been mild compared to that which the O.T. heroes or the Lord Jesus had endured. So at this point in their personal struggle they have no reason to give up. The writer thinks they should be ashamed of themselves to get so upset over a hostility which is normal to expect. It's about time they realized the Christian life is not for sissies, but people who show themselves worthy of those who made their faith possible. To sting them into this realization, the writer employs a phrase used by the Maccabean leaders. When fighting against the enemies of the Jewish faith, those leaders challenged their followers to go out there and "resist unto death" the foes of Israel. The readers knew that phrase. In the light of it, they would feel the shame of their faintheartedness.

"But doesn't God measure the suffering in a believer's life?"

5. It would seem that you have forgotten the scriptural exhortation in which God speaks to you as His sons:

My son, don't be indifferent when the Lord disciplines you, or give up when He corrects you; 6. for

the Lord disciplines every one He loves, and He chastens every one He accepts as a son.

7. So be patient. Submit to His discipline as long as it lasts, for it is not sent in anger. Accept it as from a loving Father Who seeks to train you, for God is dealing with you as His own children. When you come right down to it, what son is there whom his father does not correct? 8. If you find yourself without discipline, you could ask whether or not you belong to God. No discipline at all could mean you're not in the family.



FORGOTTEN. After shaming them, the writer now seeks to comfort his readers. They've been complaining about the trials they've had to endure for Jesus' sake. Now he would remind them that every affliction they suffer comes from the hand of a loving Father. It's true of course, that Christians live in a world that hates God. All sorts of abuses and persecutions will come against them, as well as trials and afflictions. On the surface these appear to be the natural result of living in a world ruled and racked by evil. The fact that they are God's sons guarantees they will suffer the world's hatred (John 15:19). Even so, they are to view everything that comes against them as from the hand of God. Why? He is in complete control of all things. Nothing can come into a believer's life unless He permits it. This is what they have forgotten in the midst of all their complaining. They've gotten their eyes OFF their heavenly Father and **onto their troubles**. They've forgotten that suffering and trials are necessary for growing up in the faith life and for running the race. To prove his point, the writer quotes Prov. 3:11,12. He uses the Scripture as the voice of God to remind them that ALL of their sufferings are God's hand of discipline upon them, USED by Him to train them. Every sorrow or trial a Christian endures is designed for his blessing, never for his harm. Consequently the readers are urged not to despise their troubles, but to see God behind each one. Every bit of

suffering a Christian endures is **MEASURED** by God to make sure it is just right for him.



ACCEPT IT. When the writer asks his readers to accept all suffering as from God, he doesn't mean for them to resign themselves to it passively, as did the stoics. They believed **everything** that happened was God's will and there was nothing anyone could do about it. Their approach was to "grin and bear it." But this is **NOT** what the writer has in mind. He wants them to regard every affliction and sorrow as a **TEST** from the hand of a loving Father Who would never cause them a needless tear. If a Christian will work hard to get an "A" on the test, relief will come as soon as he has made the change the discipline calls for. But the problem is the **PAIN**. The believer becomes so occupied with the **HURT** that he can't see beyond it. He forgets all about God's part in the process. He views his troubles as "accidents" or "misfortunes" which he must do his best to solve. Christians sometimes feel the **blows of life** come from a God Who is angry with them because of some sin. And that what they're suffering is His retaliation. The truth is, God doesn't have a vindictive "bone in His body." He never reacts against us for what we **DO** or **DON'T** do. Everything He allows to come against us is for our own good. What He can't stand is to see us waste our lives, letting days go by without any changes. Because of that, He will not let us pass through this life without discipline or chastening. If Christians will begin to thank God in the lesser trials, they'll soon find themselves able to praise Him no matter what He sends. Practice makes perfect, even in this.



NO DISCIPLINE. All of us have seen children whose parents refused to discipline them. They are unbearable. To the author's mind, there is no such thing as a child of God without chastisement. Those who claim to be Christians, yet are never chastened, make a false claim. On the other hand, we have believers who wonder why they have to suffer while others, who do

the same things, escape the consequences. The answer is simple. One is a child of God and the other is not. A father disciplines his **own** children, not those of strangers. The true Christian knows God **MUST** discipline him. There are too many things in our lives which we hang onto unless He deals with us. The hard fact is, we like things the way they are . . . we resist change. We even have an expression, "Don't rock the boat," which means . . . I want my situation left undisturbed. But God **IS** a "boat rocker." He doesn't want things the way they are. So He lets trials come into our lives to break up the status quo. If God **DIDN'T** use our trials and sufferings for His purposes, He'd be treating us with indifference. It would be as though we were **NOT** His real children, but "bastards" as the KJV calls them. A man who is bringing up a son to be his heir, devotes time and effort making sure he is worthy of the inheritance. But that same father wouldn't put forth a similar effort with a child born outside his marriage. Why? He would **NOT** be an heir. Since we are true sons of God, born to Him by the Spirit, and "joint-heirs with Christ," we can expect God to use **EVERY** trial and affliction to prepare us for the glorious estate ahead of us.

"Discipline isn't exactly new to us, is it?"

9. What's more, when we were children, the fathers of our flesh disciplined us and we respected them for it. Shall we not then submit even more readily to the Father of our spirits and grow up in the real life? 10. After all, our human fathers disciplined us for a few short years, doing what seemed best according to their limited wisdom. But God, in His unlimited wisdom, chastens us with an eye to what is best for us, because He wants us to share in His holiness. 11. Of course, it's no fun being chastened. It hurts while we're going through it. But if we can look on it as a spiritual workout and be exercised by it, we'll like the results—the peaceable fruit of righteousness.



When we were children, our writer says, we accepted discipline from our human fathers because we believed it was their place to chasten us. How much more then, he argues, ought we to submit to the Father of our spirits?



FATHERS/FLESH. Aware that his readers had become discouraged through the persecutions God was using as instruments of discipline, the writer makes a comparison between our earthly fathers and our heavenly Father. When we were children, he says, we accepted discipline from our human fathers because we believed it was their place to chasten us. How much more then, he argues, ought we to submit to the Father of our spirits? His use of the strange term, "Father of our spirits" is deliberate. It points out the huge difference between our two fathers. Our earthly fathers provide us with **bodies** only. There is **NO WAY** for a **soul** to be created by the human birth process. Only God can do that, because the soul which is spirit in essence, is the image of God (Jo. 4:24). Man is not a body. He merely wears one. Thus the role of our fathers is limited to physical control. That control lasts only until the body reaches maturity, a few short years. God, on the other hand, exercises an **ETERNAL** parenthood because He is the Father of our spirits, which are eternal. So the argument is this: If we're willing to submit to human fathers

who disciplined us in preparation for earthly life, how much more should we be willing to submit to the One Who prepares us to live forever in heaven? As far as the writer is concerned, that's the real life. Our time on earth is merely a probationary period.



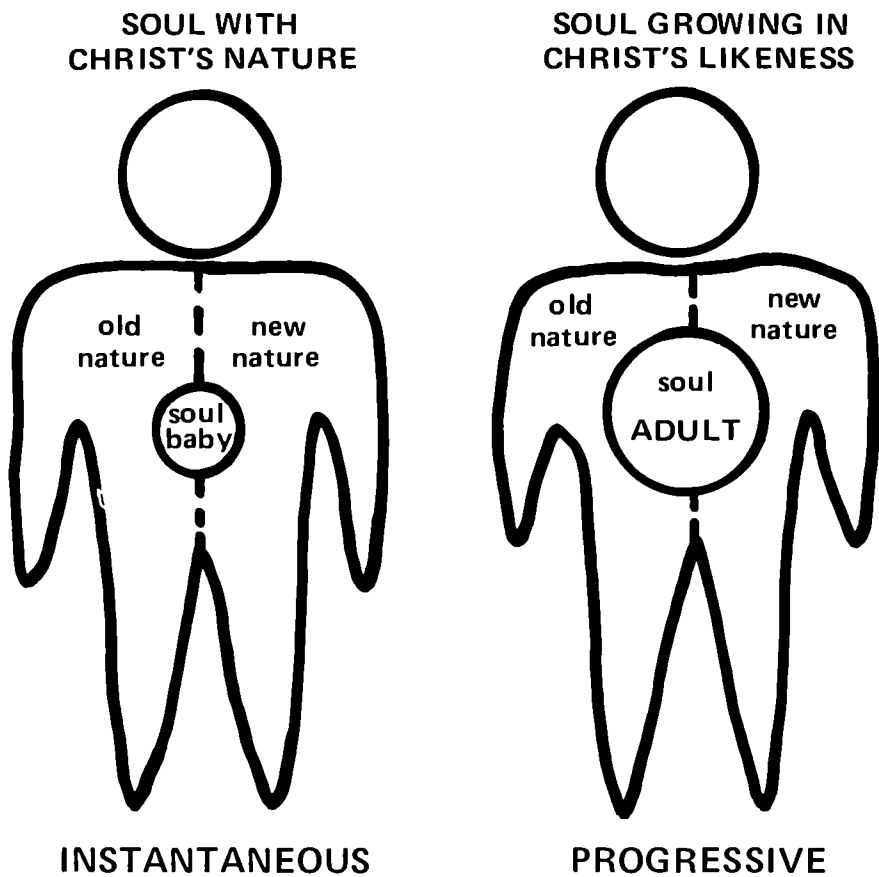
SHARE/HOLINESS. Furthermore, continues the writer, our human fathers disciplined us to make us productive members of the household. While their actions were often marked by ignorance and selfishness, we finally do take our place in the family. God, on the other hand, is never arbitrary in His dealing with us. Everything He allows to come against us is for our profit. Every testing we endure is calculated to change us into the likeness of Jesus and increase our endurance. It doesn't matter whether we drop a tiny part while working on something, discover cancer in our bodies or are thrown in jail for witnessing—it is all part of His plan for us. But O how long it takes us to learn that. Yet we must learn it, for it is only through suffering that we do come to holiness. And why does He want us holy? Because He is holy. The future fellowship He has planned for us is also holy. He has to get us ready for it. That's why the established path is "suffering first and the glory which follows." For God to let us go through this life unchanged and unholy is unthinkable. The more holy we become, the more suited we are for a place near Him in the eternal fellowship. There is no joy for God in being holy unless He can share His holiness with others. And since discipline is the road to holiness, He has to take us over it. With our future life one of utter holiness, we might as well get used to living godly now. There will be no sudden shift from worldliness at death. It takes **TIME** to change. That's why God refines us with suffering. Praise His name that He doesn't let us find peace and satisfaction in this life at the expense of our eternal joy.



NO FUN. When our author tells us that discipline is no fun, that's something we already know. It doesn't matter whether the chastening is human or

divine—it hurts. But it is supposed to. God, in His wisdom knows it takes PAIN to accomplish His will in us.

THE CHRISTIAN'S 2 KINDS OF HOLINESS



When the subject of holiness is raised, we need to be aware of TWO KINDS found in the Word: **instantaneous** and **progressive**. (1) When a person is saved, he receives Christ's own righteous nature. He is then holy in God's sight, for he's IN Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This new nature NEVER changes. It doesn't have to, it's perfect. But we can't say the same for the believer (soul) who has received this new nature. Having a new nature doesn't change a person—**until he yields to it**. (2) When he does, the **gradual** changes which occur in his daily life are referred to as **progressive holiness**. The degree to which he is able to surrender his will to Christ and allow the trials of life to wean him from his old nature, to that same degree he advances in personal holiness. The man himself (the soul), begins to take on the holiness of Christ. When the Christian leaves this life, he ceases to develop in personal holiness. Why? The conditions for change exist only in earthly life. The more holy we become in our persons while on earth, the more we qualify for a place near the Lord in His kingdom (reward).

Suffering is needed to get our attention. When things are comfortable, we have no thought of changing. We like things the way they are. So suffering is a necessary instrument for the transformation of our souls. If we can accept it as coming from the hand of a loving Father, each trial becomes a spiritual workout. Our author's word "exercised" comes from the Greek word, "gymnazo," referring to the discipline of a gymnasium. Our workouts (trials and afflictions) become less painful when we cease to rebel against them and no longer resent God's discipline. We intensify the pain when we question God's goodness. The hurt is greater when we ask, "Why me?" or "Why did it have to come at this time?" The sooner we yield to the suffering and let it do its work in us, the quicker God can end the workout. He doesn't want us suffering a moment longer than necessary. It hurts Him to see us in pain. He wants us healthy, happy and prosperous. That's the way He is. But He also knows it takes pain and stress to reshape us. Since holiness has the priority over happiness and health, He must send the pain. However, by putting our trust in Him, we can reduce the anguish in the same way that physical relaxation reduces physical pain. When we stop fretting and begin to judge ourselves, confess our sins and rest in His goodness, then we know REAL PEACE. This is the fruit of righteousness. It is a precious thing to relax and let God have His way with us. It brings the contentment and peace for which our souls really long.

"What about those who become discouraged under God's discipline? Can they snap out of it and get back into the race?"

12. So then, pull yourselves together and get back into the running. Lift up your feeble hands and take a fresh grip on the life to which we've been called. Brace your shaky knees, 13. and walk in a straight path so that the lame ones following you will not turn aside and be permanently damaged. As much as lies within your power, try to heal them.



SO THEN. With those words, (“so then”) the writer concludes his explanation of God’s discipline. He is aware of how painful it has been for his readers to suffer under God’s discipline without knowing the purpose behind it. Because they didn’t know what the discipline was all about, the situation in this church had become pretty gloomy. In their discouragement, they had become cold and indifferent. They’d lost their fighting spirit. They were far from being “on fire” for Christ. From the beginning of this letter, the great concern of the writer has been the lethargy and faint-heartedness of these Hebrew Christians. They’ve been reacting **AGAINST** discipline that is normal for the child of God. As a result, they have been shrinking from the way of the cross with its shame. But now that they have learned the purpose **BEHIND** their afflictions, the writer expects them to shake off their stupor. Having learned that God is dealing with them as sons, he expects his readers to get on the ball and get back into the race. Quoting from Isa. 35:3 and Prov. 4:26 he uses the figures of “weak hands” and “shaky knees” to picture their weakened condition. If you can visualize a runner with his arms hanging down and his knees shaking, he is hardly a competitor for a race. So he says to them in essence, “C’mon, you can do it. Now that you know God is working in your lives to help you win, take a deep breath and get back into the race!”



LAME. When the writer uses the words “lame ones,” he is still thinking of the race. Some of these Hebrew Christians were so bad off spiritually, he calls them **LAME**. In the Greek, the word for “lame” is a figurative description of someone wavering between two beliefs. In this instance, it pictures a discouraged believer wavering between Christianity and Judaism. Because of what they were suffering for Christ, Judaism was looking pretty good to some of them. Those who were most depressed were on the verge of giving up and going back to the old religion. That’s what the writer means by lameness. When the heart goes out of a person

he loses his spirit. He no longer has any vision to spur him on. A little encouragement right at that moment, could make all the difference. This is what our writer has in mind. He knows the stronger ones in the fellowship will quickly recognize the truth of what he's been saying about life's trials. When they see how their afflictions are designed to make them strong and build their endurance, they'll forget Judaism and concentrate on winning the race. When they RELAX in the Lord and enjoy sweet relief through submitting to God's discipline, their enthusiasm will mount swiftly. When that happens, they become powerful encouragement for the weaker ones. It's a lot easier for a wavering believer to be firmed up and healed when those around him have taken a strong stand for Christ and have settled down in the race. Our writer's strategy is clear—get the strong ones back into the running and the weak ones will be encouraged to follow their example.

“What kind of changes does God expect us to make?”

14. Do everything you can to live in harmony with all men, yet striving for a holy life, without which no one will see God.



HARMONY/HOLY. Once believers are back in the race, two things must become the aim of their lives—harmony and holiness. The author knows how quickly dissension divides a church. And a divided church is a hindrance to the cause of Christ. When believers are busy fussing with each other over doctrines and issues, they easily lose sight of their goal. The fragmented church of today is proof enough. Like Paul, our author gives top priority to peace and harmony with all men, especially those within the fellowship. And yet, this unity is not to be achieved at any price. While almost everything is to be sacrificed for the sake of harmony, we cannot compromise the purity of our lives. Personal holiness has an even **higher** priority because it is directly related to our dedication to Christ. Total dedication to

Jesus produces holiness in the life. One must be holy if he is to see the Lord and appear with Him. The life of the Christian should be dominated by the fact that he is going to live with a holy God. The goal is to become more and more like Christ. If a person doesn't have any desire to be like Jesus, he will not see the Lord. The desire to be different and separate from the world comes with the new birth (1 John 3:3). When a man is saved, he receives Christ's own holy nature, and that nature seeks to express itself in the believer's life. But if a person claims to be born-again, yet cares nothing about living a godly life, it is clear that he is NOT born-again. So while harmony within the fellowship is vital for the sake of the church, holiness in the life is even more vital to the individual believer. Only holy natures can enter a holy heaven.

15. Watch carefully. See to it that each man remains true to his profession as a Christian, for it is possible to come short of the grace of God. Such a person is like a poisonous weed and could have a disastrous effect on the rest of the group. 16. Also take care that none of you falls into immorality and becomes so earthly-minded that he is ready to trade away the prize God holds out to him. Such a person would be like Esau who exchanged his rights as the oldest son for a single dish of food. 17. Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted his birthright again, he was rejected. Even though he pleaded with tears, he was denied a second chance. See that this doesn't happen to any of you.



WATCH CAREFULLY. While these words seem to be directed to the whole group, they definitely apply to those in charge of the fellowship. It is their task to watch out for the souls of those in their care, as we'll see in 13:17. What a task it is. Imagine a pastor today taking this instruction seriously and watching carefully for; (1) people who come short of the grace

of God, with a root of bitterness springing up in them, (2) or dealing with those involved in immorality, with lives headed toward worldliness rather than holiness. Any pastor who attempted to deal with such people in today's church, would create an awful uproar. Yet that's the force of the author's words here. The readers are told to watch out for these things and nip them in the bud. Professing Christians who are contentious, immoral and worldly, are a **threat** to any church on the road to holiness. These people are not only trouble makers, they lead others astray. When the writer speaks of those who "come short" of God's grace, he means those who have abandoned their interest in winning the race. They have turned back to the things of the world. They're headed in the wrong direction. When their actions and words begin to influence others, says the writer, they are like poison ivy. There is no way for a church, striving for holiness, to tolerate immoral and profane people who threaten the spiritual progress of the fellowship. We don't throw people out of a church because they fall into temptation. We help them. When a brother repents and changes his way, he should be restored to fellowship (2 Cor. 2:5-8). When those who prefer the pleasures of time to the treasures of eternity exert a corrupting influence on the others, they have to be dealt with. The author seems to be suggesting outright expulsion for those who hinder others from running their race. The key idea is **THREAT** to others.



IMMORALITY. The threat from immorality was very real in the writer's mind. When a Christian deliberately involves himself in immorality because he prefers it to the way of the Lord, something happens to his spiritual sensitivity. His conscience becomes hardened. God's voice within his conscience becomes fainter and fainter. If the process continues, he can reach the place where he doesn't care about the things of God at all. Consider the Christian who does this. He has sampled the revelation of God, he knows about the race and the prize awaiting him. Yet if he deliberately chooses the

pleasures of this world over the prize Jesus offers, he has started down the road that leads away from the prize. If he persists, his interests will become increasingly worldly. In time he will care nothing about spiritual wealth at all. Now a church member who goes this route can damage other lives with his example, particularly the weaker ones. Such a man, says our writer, comes short of the grace of God. If he is genuinely saved, he does NOT lose his sonship; but if he doesn't get back into the race, he WILL LOSE the right to reign with Christ. He cannot win the prize by investing in worldly things. Should he die in that condition, he will have NO SECOND CHANCE for the prize. He will have simply missed the opportunity God's grace offered him.



As an example of someone with this fatal indifference to things of the Spirit, our writer mentions Esau. He sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. Even when he wanted it back, it was for earthly wealth and not for the spiritual promises of God's blessing.



ESAU. As an example of someone with this fatal indifference to things of the Spirit, our writer mentions Esau. Here was a man of the world, a

sportsman, someone who lived for earthly pleasures even though he grew up in a home where the revelation of God was the central fact of life. The story of his coming

COMING SHORT OF THE GRACE OF GOD

The expression, "come short of the grace of God" can be confusing unless we understand how it applies to BOTH the saved and the unsaved. An unsaved man comes short of God's grace when he fails to take advantage of the invitation to become God's son through faith in Christ, i.e., born again. The saved man comes short of God's grace when he fails to take advantage of God's invitation to reign with Christ. The SAME GRACE offers both men OPPORTUNITY. When an unsaved man professes to be a Christian and then abandons the faith, he can be said to FALL FROM GRACE. When a saved man loses interest in the prize and abandons the race, he too has fallen from grace. He falls from a higher level of living for Christ to a lower one. While it is a genuine fall, it is NOT a fall from salvation. There is no way to fall from being a person's son once you're born into his family.

in from the field hungry and selling his birthright for a bowl of soup, was familiar to the readers. Afterwards, when he wanted his birthright back, he was rejected. Even though Esau cried genuine tears, his father wouldn't reverse his decision. Jacob inherited the blessing. But don't think that Esau suddenly became a spiritual man. He didn't. It wasn't God's blessing he sought. He wanted the double portion of his father's wealth which went with the birthright. Neither did he like the idea of having to serve his younger brother (Gen. 27:33,37-40). Esau never cared for the spiritual promises that went with the blessing. In later years when he became wealthy he remained indifferent to the Abrahamic promise. The application of the Esau story is clear: when a person who knows the truth, comes to the place where he despises God's offers, no second repentance is possible. Thus our writer is reinforcing what he said in Chapter Six about the impossibility of bringing enlightened people to repentance again. Having tasted the best of God's revelation, there is nothing more to attract him. So if someone in the fellowship, says the writer, goes into immorality to the point where he loses his spiritual sensitivity, it's possible he is unsaved. Even if he is a true believer, his example could be so corrupting that he must be removed from the group for as long as he remains in this status.

**"Will the author make any further comparisons
between Christianity and Judaism?"**

18. Consider how gracious and gentle has been your experience with God. You have not had to come, as did the people of Israel, to an earthly mountain and watch it blaze with fire. You have not known the terror of swirling mists of darkness, gloom and storm. 19. Neither have you had to endure fierce trumpet blasts followed by a voice so awesome and words so terrible that you begged not to have to listen. 20. The Israelites had that experience. They heard those words and were so terrified by the voice that spoke to them, they begged to hear no more. They couldn't bear

the command, "If an animal so much as touches the mountain, it must be stoned." 21. So overwhelming was the sight that even Moses said, "I am overcome with fear and trembling."



TERRIBLE. For his final comparison between Judaism and Christianity, our writer describes two scenes for us. First he takes us to the earthly Sinai, and then to the heavenly Zion. As we read his description of what happened at Sinai, he wants us to sense two things: the inaccessible nature of God and His unapproachable holiness. He wants us to feel the terror that kept men at a distance from God under the old covenant. That way we will better appreciate the grace and gentleness that draws men to Him under the new covenant. So in memory he takes his readers back to that day when God spoke directly to the people at Sinai. We're to stand with them as they behold the awesome sight of a mountain burning with fire. As we stare into the darkness and storm created by the swirling smoke, our ears are struck by shattering trumpet blasts. Then a deafening voice reverberates off the sides of the mountain as God speaks directly to our physical senses. Such was the scene when God met the Israelites in the desert and proposed to make them His personal nation. As we study that scene we see a fear-stricken people who were afraid to look upon the sight. They were even more afraid to hear the voice of God. By this means did God communicate the truth of His great holiness and the inability of sinners to approach Him. So great was the holiness present, that if an animal touched the mountain it had to be slain from a distance. It contracted so much holiness it became an instrument of death to the people. The Israelites were so terrified at the voice, that they begged Moses to do the speaking instead of God. They thought they'd die if they listened to any more. Moses, who actually went up into that dark cloud, confessed that he too trembled with fear. This event at Sinai depicts the fearfulness of the O.T. approach to God. There's no love manifested in this scene at all.

22. Now your situation is just the opposite. You have come to Mt. Zion, the city of the living God, and the heavenly Jerusalem with its countless thousands of angels. 23a. You have come to the general assembly of heaven and the church of the first born, consisting of all whose names are entered in the register of heaven.



OPPOSITE. When the readers of this letter came to God, they were not confronted with awesome manifestations of His holiness as were the Israelites at Sinai. Instead, they experienced a gentle and gracious wooing of the Spirit. It was anything but terrifying. In speaking of their salvation, he says, you have come to "Mt. Zion," and the "city of the living God," and the "heavenly Jerusalem." These terms would have no significance to Gentile readers, but they were full of meaning for these Hebrew Christians. To them, Jerusalem was the city of God, and Mt. Zion the place of His dwelling. In **spiritual terms**, these refer to His TRUE dwelling in the spiritual kingdom. For Gentiles, the word "heaven," is sufficient by itself. Now in this heavenly city ALL the residents mingle as one happy family. There is no distinction made between humans and angels, neither does he differentiate between believers in heaven and those still on earth. He says to the readers, "You have come . . .," therefore they were to include themselves in the festal assembly. In referring to believers, the writer lumps them all into one category, "the church of the first born." He gives this title to Jesus' church because the Lord is God's first born Son, and all true believers are IN HIM. As wild as it might sound, that includes every single Christian, whether he is in heaven or still on earth. Every person whose name is written in the "Lamb's book of life," (heaven's register) is IN this church. Even though you and I are on earth physically, our CITIZENSHIP is in this city right now (Phil. 3:20). What's more, as the apostle Paul says, "We sit TOGETHER (with them) in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6).

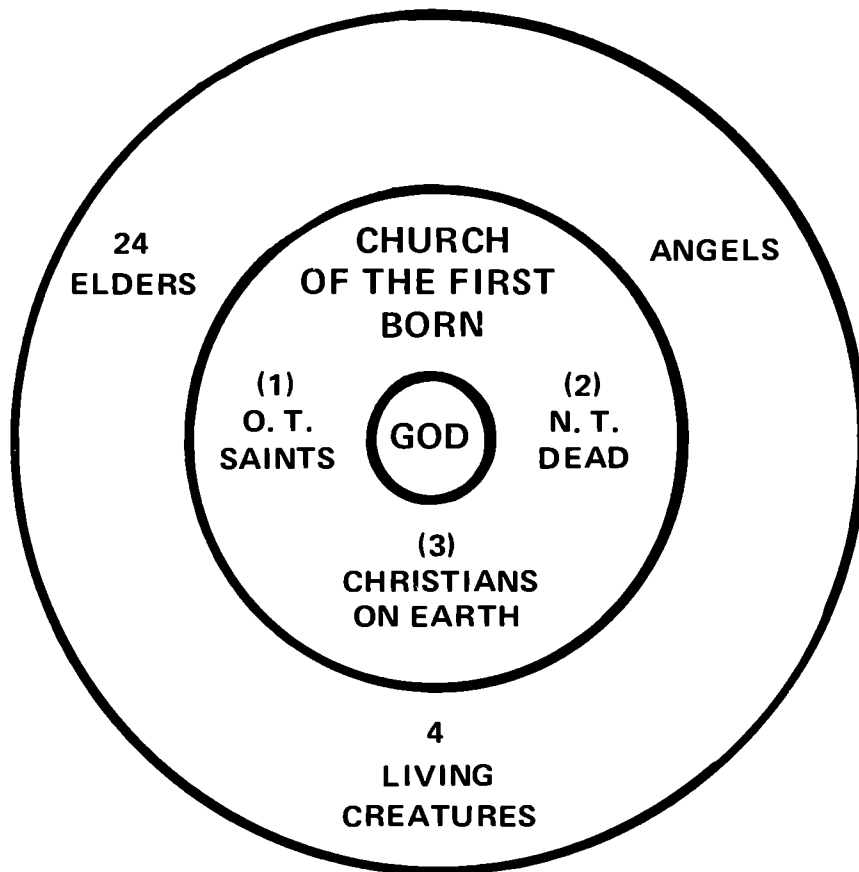
23b. You have come to the Judge, the God of ALL MEN, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect. 24. You have come to Jesus Who activated God's new covenant with man, and to His blood which speaks of far better things than the blood of Abel.



JUDGE. When the writer says we've come to the Judge, he doesn't mean to scare his readers with those words. The Israelites were in their sins and it was their sin which made the holiness of God so unbearable. Where there is no sin, holiness causes no terror. The holy presence of the Judge is not a threat to the Christian. Why? There is **NO CONDEMNATION** to those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). The matter of the believer's guilt for sin will never be raised, for all sin was laid on Christ. With the sin barrier unmoved, any true believer can stand in God's presence **UNAFRAID**. What a contrast to the way the Israelites cowered before His holiness at Sinai. The writer doesn't mean to imply that Christians need not fear the judgment itself. Every Christian must appear before God to give an account of himself (Rom. 14:12). We will all be judged on the basis of our works and receive permanent assignments in the fellowship of heaven. That is a frightening idea. But as for fearing the **Judge Himself**, there is no need. Between us and His awesome holiness is Jesus, the One Who activated the new covenant with His blood. By His blood, He cleanses our hearts and consciences of all guilt, so that we are white as snow before God's holiness. How different is His blood from that of Abel. When Abel was slain, his blood cried to God for vengeance. But when Jesus was slain, His blood cried for the opposite—forgiveness and pardon for sinners. Because of Jesus' shed blood, the holiness and majesty of God which once barred man from His presence, now draws us to Him.



SPIRITS. When the readers arrive in heaven they'll not only find themselves mingling with angels and fellow Christians who have gone on before them, they'll also fellowship with the saints of O.T. times.



With symbols, we can illustrate what the writer is saying in these verses. In the center of heaven, of course, is God. He is shown in the midst of His people, the "church of the first born." Observe the three categories of saints **WITHIN** the church; (1) the O.T. believers who received the Spirit of Christ in Sheol immediately after the Lord was released from His body on the cross, (2) N.T. believers who have died since Pentecost, (3) Christians alive on earth, but as yet without awareness of their place in the heavenly city. All those in heaven have already been judged with respect to their works and have received their **PERMANENT** assignments within the church. Those on earth have yet to be judged. Upon physical death, they will appear before the "judgment seat of Christ," and according to their judgments will be appointed their permanent place in the eternal kingdom. While angels are not a part of the church, they are part of the general assembly and mingle with believers in festive fellowship.

Abraham will be among them, so will Moses and all the heroes listed in the 11th Chapter. Note how the writer speaks of those O.T. saints—"spirits of righteous men

made perfect." Why does he call them spirits? They have no physical bodies. Fact is, they won't need bodies until it is time for them to APPEAR with Jesus when He returns (1 John 3:2). Will you also note that they are fully conscious, enjoying themselves in God's presence. That doesn't leave any room for the error of "soul-sleep" does it? They are also clothed with some spiritual form (2 Cor. 5:4). They are called "righteous men" because when they were still on earth, they were righteous in God's sight BY FAITH. Of course they didn't actually HAVE righteousness, they were simply COUNTED righteous. No one could HAVE righteousness until Jesus made it available at Calvary. After the Lord died on the cross, He went to the O.T. saints waiting in Sheol. Then He IMPARTED to them the perfection He had won for them by His obedience. As a result, those O.T. saints have everything any N.T. saint has in Christ (see drawing at end of Chapter 11). The author's point is: when we get to heaven, we will find just the ONE FAMILY of God with NO distinction between N.T. and O.T. believers. Our author wanted his readers to see again the tremendous superiority of Christianity. He is about to deliver a final warning against those who would turn away from it or refuse its privileges.

THE FIFTH AND FINAL WARNING OF HEBREWS—vss. 25-39

25. So be careful. See to it that you do not refuse to listen to Him Who is speaking to you. For if the Israelites did not escape when they refused God's warnings as He spoke to them through His earthly messenger, how much less shall we escape if we turn away from Him Who speaks from heaven?



ESCAPE. We've come to the author's last warning. All five form a series; (1) against neglecting the truth and drifting from the Lord (2:1-4), (2) against unbelief (3:7-14), (3) against falling away (6:4-8),

(4) against the willful rejection of God's provision in Christ and despising the Spirit (10:26-31); (5) refusing to listen when God Himself is speaking to you. The unwillingness of the Israelites to listen to God's voice at Sinai reminds the author of the unwillingness of his readers to listen to God's voice as He speaks to them from heaven. The Holy Spirit is pleading with them to remain loyal to Jesus and press on in the Christian life, but they are not listening to that voice. Some are even considering going back to Judaism. Hence this final warning. The Israelites in the desert didn't want to hear God's voice, so God gave His commandments through a mediator, Moses. The people promptly turned around and broke their agreement with God. As a result, He punished them by denying them entrance into the promised land. How much greater, asks the author, should be the punishment of those who ignore the voice of the exalted Son of God as He speaks to them through the Holy Spirit? The readers of this letter had far more light than did the early Israelites. They had experienced the working of the Spirit within them as well. The more light a person has, the more he is responsible to walk in that light. Thus the author is saying, you know so much more than they did. On top of that the blood of Jesus makes fellowship with God possible for you. It's inexcusable for you not to listen to the Lord when He speaks to you.

26. When He spoke to them at Sinai the earth shook at the sound of His voice. But now He promises, "Next time I won't shake just the earth, but the heavens also." 27. When He says "next time," what He means is that everything which can be shaken, and that includes the entire created universe, will be removed so that all that remains is that which cannot be shaken.



EARTH/HEAVENS. When God spoke at Sinai, the earth shook under the sound of His voice. This shaking triggers another idea in the author's mind. He is thinking of another shaking yet to come. The

prophet Haggai predicts a super earthquake, which will not only shake this globe, but everything out in space as well (Hag. 2:6). Then the author explains the super earthquake. Everything that has been created will vanish. Not only will physical things disappear, but everything earthly, carnal and sensual. This means that not only the temporal world will vanish, but so will everything evil and contrary to the nature of God. Thus we cannot think of it as merely an earthquake, but a giant SHAKING. All that will remain is that which cannot be shaken. And what is that? The new creation built upon the redemptive work of the Lord. In other words, our spiritual SONSHIP cannot be shaken, neither can those treasures we've laid up in heaven. These things are spiritual and eternal. But everything else: Satan's works, this world, our old natures, as well as all that we have done **for ourselves**—will pass away. A day is coming, says the author, when the kingdom of heaven will be purged of everything displeasing to God. When that day comes, the entire earthly system, having fulfilled its purpose will be dissolved. It will pass away with a loud BANG, says Peter (2 Pet. 3:10-13). The event will be akin to taking down a movie set after shooting a scene. The whole human story will be ended. It will then be replaced by a wholly spiritual program referred to as the "new heavens and new earth." Our eternal fellowship with God will be based on what remains.

28. Praise God we have inherited a kingdom which cannot be shaken. Therefore, in gratitude, let us worship Him as He would have us, serving Him in godly fear and awe, 29. for without question, our God is a consuming fire.



GRATITUDE. To Americans the word "kingdom" isn't so meaningful. We're not used to a kingdom. But to the readers of this letter, receiving a kingdom was an exciting idea. For centuries the Jewish people had dreamed of a day when Israel would rule the world under a great king. This is why Jesus spoke of

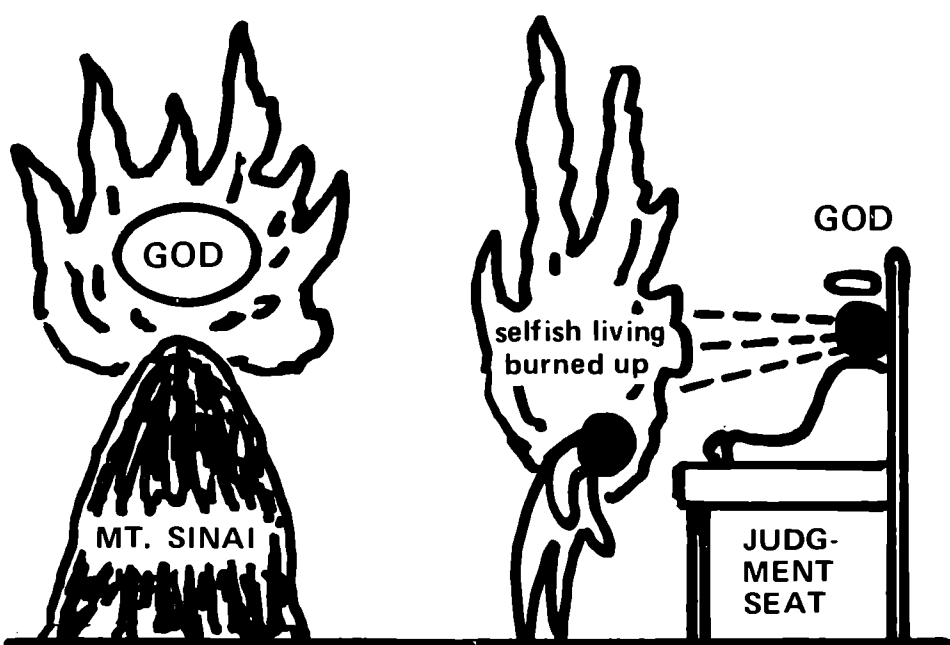
heaven as a kingdom. For us, speaking of the kingdom is simply another way of referring to our future destiny with the Lord. Instead of saying we have a kingdom, we would say that we are saved and are going to reign with Christ. And what should be our response to this guaranteed future with Jesus? The writer says that we should be so grateful that we would spend the rest of our lives serving Him with fear and awe. Since we owe Him everything we are and hope to be, it seems only right that we should deny ourselves and live as He wants us to. The writer knows his readers need this warning. They have experienced the gentle and gracious side of God only. They must realize He has a stern side too. They're going to face it one day. That is a frightening thought. We need the discipline of this kind of fear to make sure our lives are filled with those things which are pleasing to God.



CONSUMING FIRE. Note that it is **OUR** God Who is a "consuming fire." The temptation might be to think that it was the God of the Israelites Who made the mountain burst into flame. Not so. He is the **SAME GOD** and His holiness is **STILL** a consuming fire. Because of the blood of Jesus, we enjoy His presence and gentleness, but one day we will have to stand before Him and account for our lives. His holiness will **do to our lives** what it did to Mt. Sinai. Everything carnal, sensuous, selfish and worldly will be consumed. In that day we will experience the **JUSTICE** of God. Today is the day of mercy. It is easy in a day of grace and patience on God's part for believers to invest their lives in the wrong things. They occupy with jobs and houses, cars and clothes, children and comforts, but it's so foolish. It's easy to think we're getting away with "doing our own thing," but the apostle Paul calls such things "wood, hay and stubble," and you know what fire does to them (1 Cor. 3:12-15). As a result, those Christians who foolishly squander their lives in such a fashion, will find their works reduced to ashes. In that day they'll have nothing to show for their lives on earth. Now that is frightening when you consider all the light and opportunity

N. T. Christians have. The Lord doesn't like it one bit when believers refuse the opportunities He gives them. So the writer says you'd better listen to God as He speaks to you about your investment in Him. If you refuse, it will be worse for you than it was for the Israelites. So get on the ball and use your life for Christ.

OUR GOD—A CONSUMING FIRE!



The holiness of God is no different today than it was when Sinai, as part of a sin-ravaged earth, burst into flame under His presence. Having Jesus as their mediator, modern believers can approach God boldly and enjoy Him by faith. Even so, He expects obedience from them as surely as He did the Israelites. When it comes time for us to be judged, we will appear before Him to give account of our lives (2 Cor. 5:10). Everything about us that is contrary to His will and nature will be consumed by His holiness. Only that which is holy will abide. Holiness does not destroy holiness. All the dross of selfish living will be burned up. What's left will be our blood washed souls as they have **MATURED** into His likeness, and our **WORKS** done in His name. Therefore we should have godly fear with respect to that day. The apostle Paul did (2 Cor. 5:11). The Lord has every right to expect us to live for Him rather than ourselves in view of His sacrifice for us. If we throw away the opportunity, we deserve to be sorry and ashamed in that day.

“What practical implications flow from the great truths the author has given us in this letter?”

heB 13

13 1. Don't let up in your love for the brethren. 2. And keep your hearts and homes open to the stranger, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it. 3. Don't forget those in prison. Have the same concern for them as though you were sharing a cell with them. Remember those who are being abused for the gospel's sake, for you are still in the body yourselves and it could happen to you.

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LOVE. Like other writers of the N.T. our author is aware that the tremendous things he has taught in this letter demand strong practical application. So he closes with a series of exhortations to his readers to live as befits those who have received the Holy Spirit. Why? Because with the Holy Spirit living in them, their lives become an extension of God's own life. The key element of the Christian life is love, which finds its outward expression primarily in love for the brethren. When we're born again, everyone else in God's family becomes our brother. And the love we're to show toward each other is the deepest kind of brother love. No such love existed in the world until Jesus came and created the eternal family. There had been family love, love of country and even love for God, but to love someone who had no human relationship to you, as a beloved brother, was utterly new. This is why Jesus spoke of it as a "new commandment" (John 13:34,35). When this love was in action, it was so amazing that it became a terrific testimony to the reality of the Christian life. It was in fact, the "GLUE" which held the church together. But now with the glow of their conversion fading and different ones forsaking the fellowship, this love was waning. The church was in danger of becoming "unglued." So the writer's exhortation to continue in that love was extremely important.



STRANGER. The author mentions two ways in which this "brother-love" was to be shown; (1) loving care for the stranger, (2) loving sympathy for the prisoner. Christians are expected to love their neighbors in general, but that's not what the writer means by "strangers." The "strangers" in this verse were Christians who were not of their group, fellow believers whom they had never seen before. Because of their love for the brethren, they were told to keep their hearts and homes open to **all** in the family of Christ. In those days the hatred of the Jews was so intense it was hard for traveling Christians to find a place to stay. Because of their faith, many believers were forced to leave their homes. Others had to travel about in the course of handling their affairs. The inns of that day weren't fit to stay in. Not only were they filthy and disease ridden, more often than not they were brothels. There were no Howard Johnsons and Conrad Hiltons then. Christians forced to stay in the open were exposed to roving bands of thieves and robbers. Consequently it was extremely important to extend hospitality to brothers from other districts and lands. Even though they had never seen them before, "brother-love" demanded that Christians lend a helping hand to each other. In the absence of hotels and mission stations this grace of hospitality was a necessity. When our writer says that some have entertained angels unawares, he's thinking primarily of Abraham and Lot, though this was also true in several other cases as well. But he is **NOT** asking his readers to show hospitality because they could expect visits from supernatural beings. What he is saying is, that among those who come to their doors, there could be some true messengers or apostles of God (angel is another word for messenger). And if they were to receive them, they could expect in return some wonderful blessing from their teaching and benediction. Remember there were no Bibles in those days and a message from a prophet would be a terrific blessing.



PRISON. In those days many were imprisoned because of their faith in Christ. As the second way in which "brother-love" was to be shown the writer

exhorts his readers to remember their brethren in the jails and visit them. They were not to go out of a sense of duty, but out of heart-felt sympathy as though they themselves were enduring the same hardship. They were to FEEL the hurt, the same as God feels it when any of us is in trouble. Only in this way could they be an extension of God's love. Believers are able to express this kind of sympathy inasmuch as they are still in the body and exposed to similar testings themselves. In those days no one knew when it might be his turn to suffer for Jesus. The times were perilous indeed. The ability to put yourself in the shoes of an imprisoned brother and feel his suffering was a part of "brother-love." In those early times it was almost the sentence of death to be put in prison. Conditions were terrible. Consequently, believers were always trying to find ways to smuggle food and themselves into the prisons. Often it cost them their lives to reach and help an ailing brother. The early Christians became so notorious for this that one Roman emperor, Licinius, passed a law forbidding anyone to show mercy to starving prisoners. Anyone caught supplying food to them was to share the same fate as the one he was trying to help. Yet that didn't stop those early Christians. They bribed guards, paid ransoms, anything to help their brethren. This terrific sympathy for fellow believers was one of the loveliest graces of the early church. The writer is exhorting them not to let up in this grace.

"In what other areas does this 'brother-love' make a startling difference in the Christian's life?"

4. Everyone should hold marriage in the highest honor and keep the marriage bed free from stain; for God will surely judge all fornicators and adulterers.



MARRIAGE. Our author has come to another area where the Christian's bond of love makes a real difference—marriage. In those early days, marriage was not highly regarded. It is only when Christian love is applied to the marital union that it is exalted. The people

of that time despised marriage in two ways. (1) It was shunned by the ascetics, those who denied themselves any kind of physical pleasure. They believed that true happiness was found in a pure life only. And because of the sexual aspect of marriage, they felt they would become polluted if they married. Origen, the first great theologian of the Christian church, was so convinced that sex was the enemy of holiness that he castrated himself. To his mind it was the only way a man could remain undefiled. Of similar mind are those orders which forbid their priests to marry, believing celibacy to be superior to marriage. (2) The second disdainful view was that marriage was nothing more than a human invention; something people cooked up to protect the interests of the contracting parties. Often fortunes were involved, as well as titles, and marriage was a sort of "escrow" to insure against fraud. Consequently many regarded marriage as nothing more than a piece of paper, with no binding moral obligation. As a result they felt free to explore other relationships and have more than one wife. (1 Tim. 3:2). Our author, on the other hand, denies that marriage pollutes or burdens Christians. He insists that it is ordained of God, that its boundaries are sacred. His view coincides with that of Paul who taught that Christian marriage pictured the relationship between Christ and His church. Therefore, it was to be preserved in purity, each partner faithful to the other. This meant no wife-swapping, no sex parties, and no third-party allowed to intrude. Christian love made marriage a holy thing. This high view of marriage caused the early church to stand out boldly against the immorality of the world around it.



FORNICATORS/ADULTERERS. To encourage purity in the physical intimacy of marriage, the writer announces that God is going to judge all fornicators and adulterers. The words "fornicators" and "adulterers" do not mean the same thing in N.T. usage. Adultery speaks of unfaithfulness by either of the partners, whereas fornication covers the whole range of sexual aberrations, including sodomy (which abounds

today) and intimacy with various members of one's own family. A rather complete list is found in Lev. 18. While the world condones immorality and feels that promiscuity adds spice to life, God takes no such lighthearted view. In plain language this verse says that ANY violation of the marriage bond will bring God's judgment. God doesn't like it when people abuse marriage. The Word clearly says it is because of these things that the "wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6). The offending Christian of course, will not suffer God's wrath. Jesus bore that in his place at Calvary. However, he will not escape the consequences when his works are reviewed at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). There, his future role with God (reward) will be based on the outcome of that judgment; a judgment which considers both the good and the bad in a believer's life. If a man does not learn how to rule himself in this life, how can he expect to rule others in the next. Believers longing for a good job near the Lord in the next life do well to heed this exhortation.

5. Let your way of life be free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for the Lord has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," 6. Therefore we can say with assurance. . .

"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid! What can man do to me?"



MONEY. When you see a Christian grasping after money, it's clear he doesn't have a good view of what lies ahead of him. When a person is truly born-again he **already** has the wealth of heaven awaiting him (1 Cor. 2:9). A good view of his future wealth and glory should release him from the love of money or any advantage money would give him in this life. Of course if he can't see it (by faith), then he is going to try and grab all he can for himself out of this life. As a result, the Christian's attitude toward money is a **good barometer** of his spiritual development. It tells exactly how real or

unreal the promises of God are to him. The more real the promises, the more content he is with what he has. The less real, the less satisfied he is with what he has and wants more. Therefore, the basis of Christian contentment is the Word of God. In it God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." That means the believer enjoys the continual presence and help of the Lord. Could having more money improve on what God can do for him? Could an abundance of possessions make him more secure? Can the world offer him something better? In His sermon on the mount, the Lord taught that our heavenly Father so cares for us that we need be anxious "for nothing" (Matt. 6:30-34). And when it comes to protection, "If God be for us who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). With all of a person's needs in this life guaranteed by the Lord and the wealth of heaven await-




When you see a Christian grasping after money, it's clear he does not have a good view of what lies ahead of him. A good view of his future wealth and glory should release him from the love of money or any advantage money would give him in this life.

ing him, how can he possibly be discontented? Ah, he simply doesn't believe it. But if he will believe it, then all he has to do is develop a little patience. In time he will reap the glory of God. The world has nothing to compare with that!

“Will the author make a final appeal to his readers to give up the Jewish side of their faith?”

7. Remember your former leaders, those who first brought God's Word to you. Reflect on the way they lived and died and let it inspire you to imitate their faith. 8. For Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), and what He was yesterday, He is today, yes, and will be forever!

 **REMEMBER.** Dark clouds were hanging over Israel at this time. The first Jewish revolt was surely under way. Jerusalem would be in ruins before long. After that, there would be no more smoke of sacrifice rising from Jewish altars. With this fact pressing on his soul, the writer will make his final appeal for his readers to break with the old system and give up their Jewishness completely. There were risks in clinging to the old ways as we'll see. First, he asks his readers to remember their leaders of earlier days; those who first brought them the gospel. They had labored hard for Christ, sacrificing any worldly advantage that they might glorify the Lord. They were happy to die for Christ. They went out of this life clinging to one great truth—Jesus is the Christ, the only sufficient sacrifice for sin. His blood sanctifies the believer once for all. Whether in life or death, they demonstrated the truth, “the just shall live by faith.” It is not necessary to think that all were martyred, but it is clear they all considered the truth of Christ more dear than life itself. So the writer asks his readers to contemplate the faith of their former leaders and imitate it. If they will reflect on what that truth meant to those who first brought the gospel to them, it should inspire them to emulate their example.



FOREVER. It is the nature of things that leaders come and go. Each has his turn to lead in his particular generation. Then he is gone. But this is NOT true of Christ. He is always present. The former leaders had passed away, but Jesus remains on the scene. In the midst of changing times, scenes and ideas, He stands like a ROCK—for He is changeless. Since He is eternally the same, God's Word to these Hebrew Christians is incapable of change. That's why they can safely imitate the faith of their former leaders. That faith never changes. If the Lord doesn't change, then the truth about Him can't change. Verse 8 is breathtaking and beautiful for it speaks of Christ as the unchangeable revelation of God. He is the same as He was **yesterday** and will be the same forever. In this letter, the writer has already held up to us what Jesus was **YESTERDAY**—the perfect sacrifice for our sins. **TODAY**, as our faithful High Priest, He applies His perfect sacrifice to our consciences and cleanses us from all sin. And because He lives **FOREVER**, our salvation is good forever. Abiding forever in God's presence as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, He Himself is the **eternal guarantee** that we will always be acceptable to God. (7:25). Now what this means to the readers is this: the Lord's help, and grace and power are permanently at their disposal. Just as the Lord has sustained their leaders in earlier years, so will He sustain them. Therefore the readers have everything they need to remain loyal to Christ. Any thought of going back to Judaism would be senseless in view of the changeless truth of Christ.

9. So do not let yourselves be swept off course by wild teachings. It's a wonderful thing to strengthen our souls in the grace of God, but that strengthening is spiritual. It can never come through observing rules about foods. The food approach has never profited anyone who adopted it.



WILD TEACHINGS. Until now our author has not said a word about false teachings. It has been his strategy to concentrate on the superiority of

Christ. But now he feels the need to mention false teachings and their basic error. From the text it isn't clear exactly which error made up the wild teachings. He doesn't say. Apparently it wasn't necessary. His readers knew all about them. Some had no doubt been influenced by them. What makes the teachings "wild," is that they do not square with what they have been taught about the unchanging Christ. If He remains unchanged, then the message about Him cannot be changed. Therefore, if any new truths come along which vary from the original message, they must be false. The statement that Christ is unchanging is a warning against accepting any message contrary to the teachings of the early leaders. Christianity wasn't very old when various ones began to arise in the assemblies, offering new and strange teachings. Prompted by their egos, no doubt, they came up with formulas for improving on one's relationship to the Lord. All sought in some way to improve on the faith-method handed down by the apostles. When the author mentions "rules about foods," he gives us a clue as to the essential error—trusting in OUTWARD ORDINANCES as a means of gaining spiritual strength. The word FOOD becomes a symbol for humanly devised means of drawing near to God. Some today suggest that abstaining from meat is a godly discipline which produces greater holiness. Contrariwise, the word GRACE refers to the invisible help Christians can receive from the Lord through the Holy Spirit. Thus the author is saying, don't listen to any teaching that puts the emphasis on anything but faith in Christ. It will be false. If you want to get close to the Lord, do it in spirit and in truth.

10. Besides, we don't have to trifle with such things. We have an altar from which the priests of the Jewish tent have no right to partake. Only true believers can partake of the sacrifice of our altar.



ALTAR. Inasmuch as believers are indwelt by the Lord Himself, their union with Him is perfect. To try to improve on it with rules about foods is

ridiculous. In an effort to show how pointless it is, the writer says that Christians have an altar from which the Jewish priests are not allowed to eat. Now what is the Christian altar? An altar is the place of sacrifice. The place where the sacrifice for our sin was made was the cross. Yet we're not to think of the cross in a literal sense. People still partake of that same sacrifice long after the wooden cross has vanished. How? By faith alone. Our altar is spiritual. Therefore it is ridiculous to think that anyone can appropriate its blessings with a knife and fork. Consequently, those who seek these blessings in outward rules and rituals are EXCLUDED from this altar. It is important to remember that much of the food offered in the Jewish sacrifices was eaten by the priests on behalf of the people. The readers of this letter were accustomed to the eating of the sacrifice as part of the ceremony. But to carry that idea over into Christianity, which some apparently tried to do, was error. So, the writer asks, how can the Jewish custom of eating certain foods add to what we have in Christ? The Christian's altar is superior to that from which the Jewish priests partake.

11. Under the Jewish system the high priest takes the blood of the slain animals into the sanctuary and presents it as a sin-offering, while the bodies of those animals are burned outside the camp. 12. Yet Jesus, in order to cleanse His people from sin with His own blood, suffered as a criminal and died outside the city gate.



JEWISH SYSTEM. The truth that those who trust in the outward rules and rites of Judaism are EXCLUDED from the Christian's altar is pictured in the ancient ritual of the day of atonement. On that great day, the high priest took the blood of a bullock (for his own sin) and the blood of a goat (for the sins of the people) into the most holy place of the tabernacle and sprinkled it on the mercy seat. But the bodies of the

animals from which the blood had been drawn, were taken outside the camp and burned (Lev. 16:27). Now that offering was a SIN OFFERING. And because it was a sin offering, no one was allowed to eat of it. No part of the meat was eaten in connection with the ceremony. This particular offering was a TYPE of Christ's death for our sin. The writer uses this parallel (both were sin offerings) as an argument against any eating in connection with Christ's sacrifice. People could eat by faith, but no physical eating was permitted. The fact that the priests did NOT eat the meat of the sin offering pictured the truth that Christians do NOT literally eat of anything in order to partake of the benefits of the cross. You can see how this argument struck hard against those who couldn't let go of the old Jewish ideas and wanted to insert food rules into Christianity.



OUTSIDE. The writer sees another parallel in the burning of the sacrificial carcasses "outside the camp." Jesus also suffered "outside the city gate." Golgatha was beyond the walls of Jerusalem. But that's where the parallel ends. The animals involved in the Jewish sacrifices were clearly slain **INSIDE** the camp. Their blood was taken inside the camp and then their bodies were carted out and burned. Jesus, on the other hand, died **OUTSIDE** the city. The difference in where these deaths occurred is the writer's point. When he says that Jesus died "outside the city," he means He died outside Judaism. The Lord was utterly rejected by Israel. Judaism didn't want Him. He was taken **OUTSIDE** and crucified—as if He were refuse. Therefore, His death was totally outside the Jewish system; utterly removed from it. Inasmuch as He was **EXCLUDED** from Judaism, and slain "outside the city," those who want Him must also separate themselves from Judaism and go **OUTSIDE** the Jewish system to get to Him. The Jewish altar is earthly and physical, while the Christian altar is heavenly and spiritual. The two are mutually exclusive. If a person wants the benefit of animal blood, he has to find it **INSIDE** the camp. If he

wants the benefits of Christ's blood, he has to go OUTSIDE the camp. He can put his trust in one or the other, but he cannot have it both ways. It's either Christ or Judaism.

13. But must He bear the shame alone? Indeed not. Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach with Him. 14. This crumbling world is not our permanent home; we're just passing through on our way to our eternal home, the city of God.



LET US GO. Remember our writer is speaking to Hebrew Christians, people raised in the traditions of Israel. And when he says "Let us go out to Him," it is a call to break with everything Jewish. What a challenge to his readers. It meant a complete break with the tenderest of ties, an utter forsaking of all the sacred customs that had come down to them from generations before. But what good were those customs now? None. They're dead, having been replaced by a new covenant based on Jesus' death. To go to Jesus, therefore, meant giving up Jerusalem. How hard that would be. Jerusalem was the heart of all their Jewishness. They felt safe inside Jerusalem (the Jewish system). They felt accepted and secure. But to go outside the city to that dirty old cross meant leaving their security and respectability and becoming identified with Jesus' shame. To Jew and Gentile alike the cross was a symbol of shame, an "accursed place." Yet if they want their Messiah, that's where they have to go, even if it means hatred and martyrdom. If this letter had been written AFTER the destruction of Jerusalem, the writer would not be able to speak of the city as he does here. He would have had to mention the ruin of the temple. And yet, still standing, it had nothing to offer the readers. It was merely a "shadow" of what the Jewish people had hoped for. There was no real safety or security in Jerusalem. The only SAFE city is the "one with foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (11:10). Since Christians are simply passing through this world, who wants a

permanent home on earth? We already belong to eternity. We're citizens of heaven this moment (Phil. 3:20). Therefore, we can afford the losses of money, reputation, even family separations, to be identified with Christ.

15. Because of Jesus, we no longer offer thanks to God through animal sacrifices. We now give Him a continual sacrifice of praise; that is, the fruit of lips that witness to the glory of His name. 16. In the meantime, continue to show kindness to others and keep on sharing what you have, for God is well pleased with those sacrifices, too.



SACRIFICE. Our writer has made it abundantly clear that Jesus' sacrifice for sin has put an end to any further need of animal sacrifices. But if you take away all the Jewish sacrifices, what in Christianity takes their place? That question was bound to be in the minds of his readers. They couldn't help but ask, "Don't Christians offer God anything in the way of sacrifice?" Of course they do, says the writer, and he mentions three sacrifices N.T. believers offer to God. First of all, there is the matter of giving thanks. In O.T. times a worshipper with a grateful heart would bring an animal to God as a thank offering. But the use of animals to give thanks has been made obsolete by the death of Christ. Yet the principle of giving thanks obviously remains. Under the new covenant, instead of giving thanks through an animal, the believer gives thanks through Christ. He is the sacrifice through which we now praise God. But why should "praise" be considered a sacrifice? The O.T. prophet Hosea describes the sacrifice of praise as the "fruit of our lips" (Hosea 14:2). If we were to dedicate our lips to CONTINUAL fruit-bearing for the Lord, we'd soon learn that it really is a sacrifice. Try bowing your head to ask grace before a meal in a worldly, ungodly place and see if it doesn't take a sacrifice of self. Observe that the word CONTINUAL is right in the middle of this verse. If we were to live a life of continual witness and praise, it would cost us plenty—possibly our friends

and jobs. Faithfulness to Christ always costs something. That something is a sacrifice.



KINDNESS/SHARING. If Jesus were on earth now, you and I would be telling Him how grateful we are for His sacrifice for us. Well, He's not here, but He has given us a way to do just that. He has given us the poor and needy of our neighbors and our brethren that we might show toward them what we feel for Him. With deeds of kindness and love the Christian can demonstrate the Spirit of Christ that is in him. And when he does, the act becomes a **RITUAL** of **CHRISTIANITY**. See—the ritual of Judaism has been replaced by the ritual of Christianity. Every act of kindness we do in Jesus' name can be laid at God's feet as a sacrifice to Him. It meant something for the readers to learn that kindness to others could be a sacrifice which pleased God. Sacrificing was so much a part of their lives they needed some way to present an offering to God. In the persecutions of those early days, many believers lost all of their possessions and were left in poverty. But God's grace, working in the hearts of their fellow Christians led them to sacrifice what they had in order to share with them. There are times when preaching and praying aren't enough. Sometimes it takes a bag of groceries and some clothing to show Christ's love to a needy person. It is sad when unbelievers show more compassion and practical concern for the unfortunate, than do those who claim to know God's love. This ought not to be. For the man who lives a life of continual praise, it should come naturally to him to share with others. Praising and giving go together.

"What should the Christian's attitude be toward his spiritual leaders?"

17. Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to their authority. Why? It is their responsibility to watch over your souls, knowing they will have to account to God for the job they do. So make the task as pleasant for them as you can. It will be your loss if you make

it hard for them or give them a bad time. 18. Please continue to pray for me. I am confident that my conscience is clear for I always try to do what is right before God. 19. Beyond that, I earnestly ask you to pray for me that I might come back to you the sooner.



OBEY. Above, in verse 7, the author appealed to his readers to remember their former leaders. Now he makes another appeal, asking them to submit to their present leaders. Without respect for those whom God places in charge of the flock, the church program won't work. When there's no leadership, any group of people is a disorganized mess. Nothing gets done. And without the respect of those who follow them, the leaders can't do their job. It's true that ALL CHRISTIANS are ministers of the things of God, for all have gifts of the Spirit and can help each other. But there are those whom God ordains to guide and rule. They go by such names as pastors, elders, deacons, teachers, etc. The obedience given them is NOT to gratify their sense of power or to enhance their prestige in any way. In no way are they to be exalted above any other member of the body of Christ. They're leaders only because of God's anointing and call, not because they are better than anyone else. It's like the difference between an officer's uniform and the man wearing it. You don't salute the man himself. You salute the uniform. So it is with church leaders. It's not the man that is honored, but the job and God's call to it. The greatest joy that can come to any pastor is to see those whom he leads, firmly rooted in the faith and growing in Christ. A day awaits every pastor (or leader) when he will have to account for what he has done as a shepherd. If he can present faithful servants to the Lord, it will be his thrill to see them honored. But if he has to watch his people lose their reward, that day will bring him pain. By attitude alone, a congregation can make or break a pastor. If they support him and submit to his authority, they'll reap the benefit. But if they

abuse him, they'll lose too. Everyone loses when a dedicated pastor is abused.



There are those whom God ordains to guide and rule. Our writer asks us to submit to our present leaders. Without respect for those whom God places in charge of the flock, the church program won't work.



PRAY FOR ME. Verses 18 and 19 provide the first word in the letter that sheds any light on the writer's relationship with his readers. It appears he might have held a position of responsibility with this church at one time. In any event he considers himself close enough to them to ask for special prayer. He gives two reasons why he feels they should pray for him. (1) He's been faithful to present God's truth in this letter without pulling any punches. He has given them the stern side of the gospel as well as the exciting truth of what Christ has done for them. He feels his conscience is clear in that he has been faithful to give them ALL that they

needed. Some may not have liked what he said; others may have even questioned his motives. But in his own heart he feels he's done a good job and has a right to their support in prayer. (2) He asks their help in prayer that he might come and be with them again. He may have wanted to plead with them face to face to let go of Judaism. Again, he may want them to behold the purity of his life and motives. Whatever the reason, he longs to be with them and feels their prayers will help make his return possible. We can't say exactly what hindered his going to them. Some have thought he was in prison, but surely he would have said so if that were the case. His mention of Timothy's release in verse 23 implies that he himself is not in custody.

"Having asked them to pray for him, how will he pray for them?"

20. And now may the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, Who bought His flock with the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21. equip you with everything you need to do His will. And may He bring about in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory throughout all ages. Amen.



GREAT SHEPHERD. To this point, everything the author wanted to teach was based on the fact that Christ lives as our high priest **RIGHT NOW**. But obviously He had to be raised from the dead for that to be possible. So for the first time in the letter mention is made of His resurrection, and this time He is pictured as being raised as the great shepherd. Why? The author wants his readers to sense their spiritual safety. **NO PRIEST** could ever do what Jesus did for His people—actually lay down His life for them. "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep," He said, and that's what He did. And now as the living shepherd, He watches and tends His sheep. No enemy is going to come

along and steal them from Him. Thus every Christian can be at peace. The great shepherd will not allow the wolf (Satan) to tempt any of His sheep beyond their ability to handle it (1 Cor. 10:13). "I give them eternal life," He said, "and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). Unlike the old covenant which could not put



Our writer now refers to Christ as the great shepherd who "gives His life for the sheep." And now as the living shepherd He watches and tends His sheep. The great shepherd has but one flock and they are safe forever!

away sin, the new covenant based on Jesus blood, provides cleansing from all sin for all time. Believers will be safe for as long as the covenant lasts. And since it is an **EVERLASTING** covenant, they are **SAFE FOREVER!** The great shepherd has but **ONE FLOCK**. Those who tend the flock in His name are undershepherds. The writer knew his readers would suffer for their faith in the days ahead. And it would be the task of the undershepherds to see that they were not intimidated, but remained steadfast in pure devotion to Christ.



GOD OF PEACE. This has been a book of warnings with the writer stressing the sterner, harsher side of the gospel. Still, he doesn't want his readers thinking of God as a stern judge only. So he begins his benediction, one of the most beautiful in the Bible, by addressing Him as the "God of peace." Now there are two kinds of peace associated with God; (1) peace **WITH** God as we put our trust in Jesus; (2) and the peace **OF** God, which is ours when we know our lives are pleasing in His sight. The former has to do with salvation, the latter with our walk before God. Both kinds are referred to in this benediction. Until we're saved, **ENMITY** exists between us and God (Eph 2:3). But once we put our trust in Jesus, we enter into a perfect relationship with God (becoming His sons), which lasts forever. This brings **PERMANENT** peace **WITH** God. Then another kind of peace is ours when we yield to the indwelling Lord. As we submit to Him, He works **IN US** to make us more like Himself. The more we become like Jesus, the more we do the Father's will and are pleasing in His sight. When we know that what we do and say is pleasing to God, we enjoy the peace **OF** God. The writer is thinking that if his readers will submit to Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, He will lead them out of Judaism. So, in effect, he is praying that they will be empowered by the Lord to forsake the Jewish system completely. With their salvation sealed under the new covenant, they need no other sacrifice; no other priest. They don't need Judaism at all. The writer closes the

doctrinal and practical parts of the letter with the "Amen." In Hebrew this means. . . "So be it!"

22. Please brethren, bear patiently with my exhortation, for this letter really isn't long compared to what I could have written.



EXHORTATION. In many translations it sounds as if the writer is calling this a brief letter, yet it is 13 chapters long. However, because of the "God bless you all," at the end of the letter we know that it was to be read aloud to the congregation. In those days when few could read and there was no N.T., listening was the only way to learn and be exhorted. To listen for an hour wasn't long at all. That's the amount of time it would take to read this letter aloud. So for its purpose, it is actually brief. Now this letter has been pointed and direct. He has charged the listeners with being spiritually immature, calling them babies still on the bottle (5:12,13). He has warned them to "get on the ball," or suffer the consequences at the judgment seat of Christ, for "God the Lord will judge His people" (10:30). He has spoken of God's chastening hand in the trials of life as He disciplines His own (12:5-7). He could have gone on about their unbelief and how close they were to turning away from Jesus, but he didn't. He was careful not to lay on them more than they could bear. In fact, he is almost apologetic for saying as much as he has. It's no fun listening to a letter that deals with your immaturity for a solid hour. Of course, if he were speaking of how safe they were in Christ, and how they are going to appear with the Lord in glory, they could have listened for hours without becoming weary. If he had talked of miracles and signs of the Lord's coming, the letter would not have been long enough. But to talk of wasted lives and the consequences, is something Christians do not like to hear. The writer knows this. That's why he asks the readers to bear with his words patiently.

23. I'm pleased to inform you that our brother Tim-

othy has been set free, and if he comes to me soon, I will bring him with me when I come to see you. 24. Please give my greetings to your leaders and all of the Lord's beloved ones there. The brethren from Italy ask to be remembered to you. 25. God's grace be with you all.



GREETINGS. Before extending his personal greetings, which was done at the end of letters in those days, our writer shares some news about Timothy. We must assume he is referring to Paul's junior companion. By this time, Timothy was a well respected leader, known across the church. He's been in prison, perhaps in the very city where the author was staying. But now he's been released. If he doesn't delay too long in joining the writer, they'll journey together to visit the readers. In deference to what he has said about the special call and status of the leaders, he salutes them first. Then the rest of the fellowship. To his salutations, he adds those of some Italian believers. The words, "brethren from Italy," don't help us one way or the other in determining whether the letter was written from inside Italy or not. All they tell us is that certain Italians present with him have something in common with those to whom he is writing. Likely they are away from their native land and sending greetings back to Rome—if we're correct in assuming the letter was directed to Hebrew Christians in that city. For his final benediction he uses a phrase similar to that used by the apostle Paul. . . "May God's grace be with you all." For all we know, he may have picked it up from the apostle. The words ". . . be with you all," when read aloud, make it seem as though the writer were addressing the group himself. That's how we know it was to be read aloud. With these final words he reminds them of the grace that binds them to him and to God.

* * * * *

We have come to the close of this wonderful epistle. Though written for Hebrew believers, it offers many

rich truths for us. We do not know what effect this letter had on those for whom it was written. But we do know that it has had a great influence on multitudes since that time. The author never dreamed, of course, that his letter would one day become part of the New Testament and reach into lives for centuries. However, the human heart remains the same. Things haven't changed much since the letter was written. The circumstances may vary, but human attitudes are the same now as they were then.

The average Christian today is underdeveloped. He has little idea of what it means to get involved with Christ; the kind of commitment it takes to be a God pleaser. Few give thought to reaching for spiritual maturity. Most are content to "drift" along with the ways of the world, scarcely realizing that God expects them to make as complete a break with the world as the readers were with Judaism. But believers don't like to hear that. Tell the average Christian today that Christ must come ahead of his family or earthly security and he resents it. He doesn't want anything to interfere with his striving for creature comforts. That he will have to stand before the Lord and give account of his wasted time and talent is the last thing the average Christian wants to hear. God grant that all of us will leave this book with the author's exhortation ringing in our hearts. . .

"LET US PRESS ON TO MATURITY!"

Heb. 6:1

CONCLUSION

A VITAL WARNING FOR TODAY

We have seen that the book of Hebrews was written to warn Jewish Christians **NOT** to turn their backs on Christ and return to Judaism. Further we have seen how that Jesus is superior to the prophets of old; better than the greatest of angels — why He even surpasses Moses! But the biggest truth of all is to see that our Lord's **SINGLE SACRIFICE** takes care of all sin forever!

If you were a Jewish Christian coming into this truth for the first time, you would be floored by the fact that Jesus' **ONE SACRIFICE** is greater than all the countless sacrifices made on Jewish altars for 1400 years put together! That means that never again will **ANY** sacrifice have to be made for sin again. In view of that overwhelming fact, who in his right mind would want to go back to the killing of animals in endless offerings for sin? Not you. Now that you know Jesus has done it **ONCE FOR ALL**, it would be ridiculous to trade the **REAL THING** for those old Jewish shadows (10:12). Christ is all you need. This letter has done a tremendous job in your spirit. It utterly erases from your mind any thought of turning away from Jesus.

THIS LETTER IS JUST AS URGENT NOW AS IT WAS THEN

Did you know that plans are being made to rebuild the Jewish temple in Jerusalem? And that Christians are falling for the idea? Believers are being asked to contribute to excavating the temple site and getting ready to build it again. Now it is true that the temple is going to be rebuilt **BEFORE** the Lord comes, but it is no project for today's Christian. Why? You know

who's going to occupy that temple, don't you? ANTI-CHRIST! Beyond that, do you know what the Jews are going to do once the temple is completed? Begin again the program of animal sacrifices FOR SIN! Since they have refused Jesus' PERFECT sacrifice, they'll want to revive the old program established by Moses. The prophet Ezekiel predicted this would happen in the latter days (Ezek. 46:1-18).

A KNOWLEDGE OF HEBREWS SETTLES THE MATTER

There is no way for a person with a grasp of the book of Hebrews to get excited about the rebuilding of the Jewish temple or any revival of Judaism for that matter. The book was written for the express purpose of warning Christians to make a complete break with the old religion. Very clearly the writer says that God has no pleasure in "burnt offerings and sacrifices" (10:8). He insists that Judaism is obsolete, that God has replaced it with Christ, "taking away the first, that He might establish the second" (10:9).

As we approach the end of this age, we will witness a GREAT REVIVAL of Judaism. And it won't be of God. When antichrist arrives on the scene, he is going to enter into a covenant with Israel. His awesome powers will convince her he is Messiah. As Israel rises to power under this man's leadership, Judaism will be revived. It will become the dominant religion of the world, as people of all races flock to it. When that happens the present roles will be reversed—Judaism will become the dominant religion and Christianity will again be the persecuted minority, just as it was in the first century.

When that day comes, we'll have the SAME SITUATION as existed when the book of HEBREWS was written. That means God's people are going to need

this book again. With Judaism the favored religion, Christianity will be looked upon as FALSE teaching and Christians will be persecuted once more. The temptation then will be to cast a longing eye upon prosperous Judaism and wonder if you weren't mistaken about Christ. With the temple going full blast once more and antichrist's miracles SEEMINGLY CONFIRMING the program, ungrounded Christians will wonder if Judaism wasn't right after all.

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Some have felt the GREAT APOSTASY predicted by the apostle Paul would occur as nominal Christians joined the ecumenical movement. But neither that movement nor the Catholic church has the MIRACLES to compete with the glory of this man and Judaism. I'm convinced the great apostasy will occur as professing Christians leave the church in droves to align themselves with Judaism. This wholesale exodus will, of course, have a purifying effect on the church. But what about the sincere, but weak Christians? What about carnal believers and those who aren't as close to Christ as they should be? Why Satan will whisper to them just as he did in early days . . .

"Why make your family suffer by clinging to a faith now proved wrong? Judaism was given by God centuries ago, and is the true faith. Nothing has changed. Forget the Carpenter. Worship the God of the Jews. Get on the winning side!"

See how the saints of this century will be subjected to the SAME doubts and agonies that beset their brethren of the first century? The **same** temptation will be present. The only thing God has at hand to WARN and DELIVER them is the book of Hebrews. That's why I feel this book is STILL important to God's people. For the past two years, the Lord had me work steadily on this letter. It's done now and in your hands . . . and not a bit too soon, either. With

the closing of this age, it will be as important to God's people now as it was to those early Christians.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS BOOK

With the expected rise of antichrist and Judaism soon to become the favored religion, churches as we know them may not be able to continue as they have. The "prince of Israel" (antichrist) can be expected to make it rough for those Gentiles who do not embrace Judaism. Therefore it is not too early to think of banding together, in small prayer and Bible study groups, as did those Jewish Christians of A.D. 68. The home will again become the center of Christian fellowship.

If you agree with me, then you can see how important this book of Hebrews is to God's people. It should be going into lives NOW! These truths should be at work alerting and preparing believers for the SHIFT that is sure to come right after antichrist surfaces. My contribution has been to surrender to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to prepare the LIGHTS. Your part may well be to share them with others. Obviously these LIGHTS can be of great benefit to a Sunday school teacher. But we can't count on having Sunday school classes for too much longer

This means the task could fall on YOU.

Now that isn't as burdensome as it sounds. You've already read the LIGHTS in this volume. The Holy Spirit has undoubtedly revealed things to you that go beyond what you've read. It's not too early to think about using your home as a place where Christians could gather to be briefed by you in these things.

HERE'S HOW YOU COULD DO IT

I know you generally think of a teacher as some-

one standing before a class bringing a prepared lesson. Well, I'd like you to forget that image. Instead, see yourself relaxing in an easy chair, with five or six others forming a circle about your living room. Let each person take a verse. Have that person tell or explain what he sees in the verse. And while he is doing that, you can glance at the LIGHTS and lift out two or three main points that you can share.

If you want each person to have a copy of this text, that makes for great discussions. But if they use King James or any of the popular versions, such as The Living Bible, the effect will be most dramatic if you bring forth the "goodies" found in the LIGHTS.

The easiest way to do this, is to read the verses and LIGHTS ahead of time and mark with a felt pen the truths that you would like to share. About 15-20 minutes would be plenty of time for this. You probably wouldn't cover more than 10 verses or so in an evening. You really want to get them to open up and ask questions and generate discussions. That's where a lot of real learning occurs. And the perfect place for it is your home. Unless your group has an enormous appetite for the Word, I would limit the time to 30 or 40 minutes.

Now, if you keep before the group the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, which is the main theme of Hebrews, you'll accomplish your mission. Once the idea of Christ's perfect sacrifice gets into their minds, they won't be tempted to consider Judaism, no matter how exalted it becomes in the world. You will have prepared them and at the same time protected them. The Lord will let you know, in your own spirit, what a tremendous thing you have done.

IF YOUR GROUP WISHES TO CONTINUE

Sometimes a group such as yours will be so successful, and have such good times in the Word, they won't want to stop when one book is finished. Fortunately there are OTHER volumes of LOVETT'S LIGHTS. If your group elects to continue, I suggest that you take up the Gospel of John next. It is not so intense and presents the Lord in some fantastic scenes. After that, you might be ready for Romans—the hardest book of the New Testament.

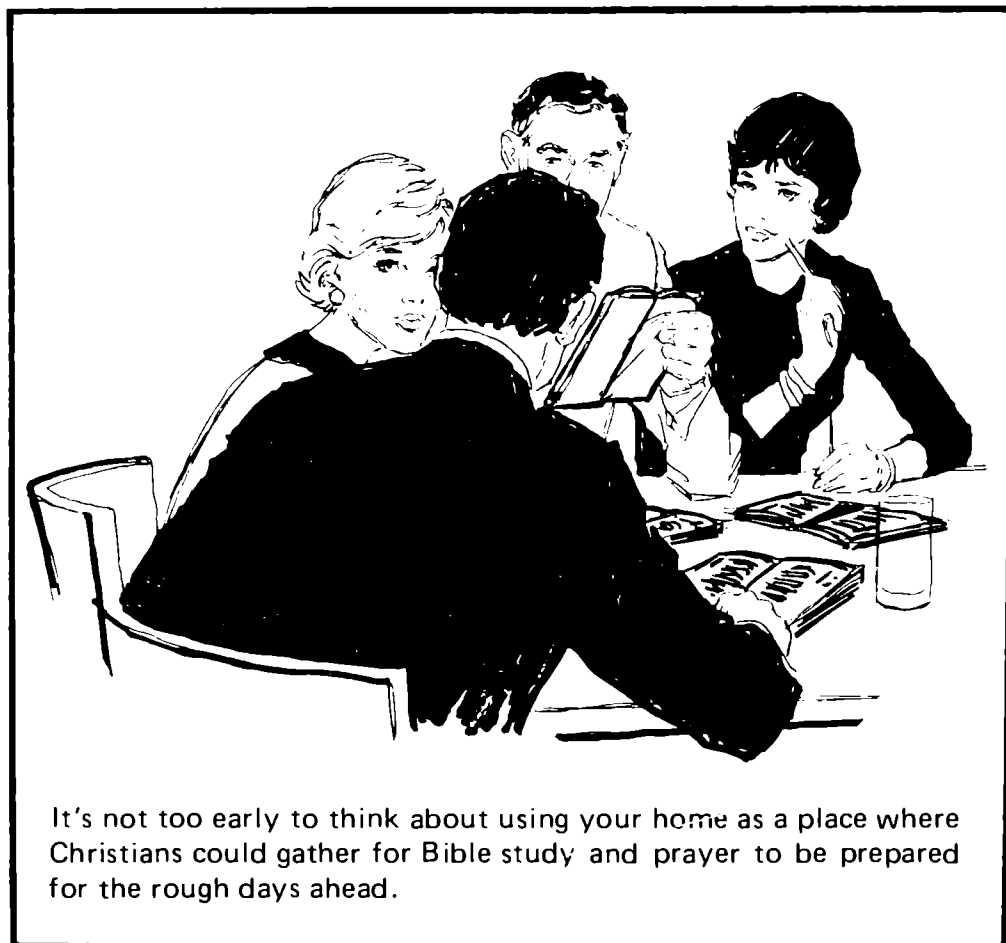
It won't seem right for you to meet and not have prayer, so it would be spiritually healthy to pray around the group before you actually begin the study. Try to lead your people into INFORMAL conversations with the Lord. He hates formality. It puts His people at a distance and they end up praying AT HIM rather than enjoying Him. Our Lord is a really warmhearted Person who likes to be in on everything we do. So be innovative when it comes to making HIM a part of your group. In fact, since we feel so much at home in His presence, we should go out of our way to make Him feel at home with us. Do this, and your group will experience a new thrill in fellowshiping with Jesus.

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR ME, TOO?

So much of myself has been poured into those LIGHTS, I hope you'll feel like you are getting acquainted with me as you read them. And if you do, will you include me in your prayer group? I mean, will you pray for me? I'll be working on other LIGHTS as you work on these and if I know you're praying for me, that will really help.

So, I've given you an idea and a real challenge. The Holy Spirit will witness to your spirit that the time has come to get these prayer and Bible study groups going. God's people need desperately to get into the

Word. And you're going to be a key person in His program. The only way anyone can recognize the difference between true and false teaching, is to know God's Word. It's all that will keep us in the rugged days ahead. Believe me, it will mean a great deal to you and your family to know what to expect in these last days, so that your faith won't be shaken when it begins to come to pass.



It's not too early to think about using your home as a place where Christians could gather for Bible study and prayer to be prepared for the rough days ahead.

Now I commend you to the Lord Jesus and to His precious Word. I know He will lead you and keep you and use you for His glory! Isn't He wonderful! And isn't it glorious that He is the same "Yesterday, today and forever!"

Maranatha! Come, blessed Lord Jesus!

"CS"

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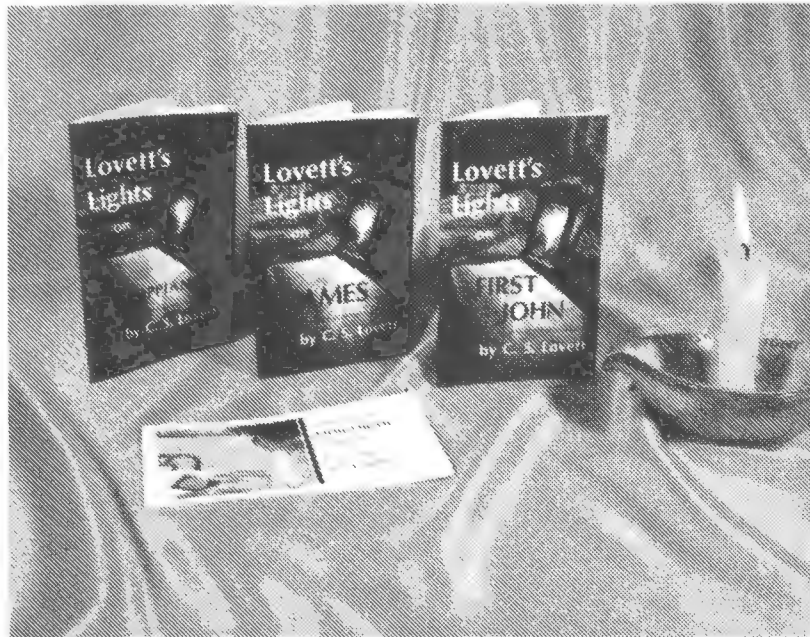
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